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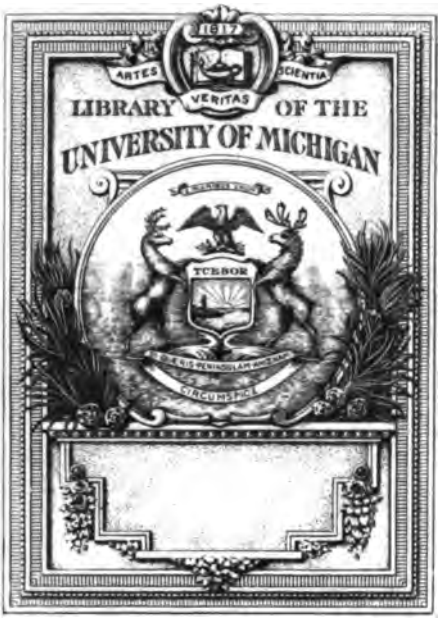

THE GIFT OF
Dean Joseph A. Bursley

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The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a General Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

JEAN

Translated into English by

EDITH MARY NORRIS

VOLUME II

THE FREDERICK J. QUINBY COMPANY

BOSTON LONDON PARIS

Edition

Limited to One Thousand Copies

Number.....

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PRINTED ON OLD STRATFORD PAPER MADE BY
MITTINEAGUE PAPER COMPANY

Plimpton Press
Printers and Binders, Norwood, Mass.
U.S.A.

Jean [illegible]
3-31-43

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CHAPTER I

The Dame of the Diary

Upon awakening late on the morning after his nocturnal adventure Jean had entirely forgotten the two ladies he had assisted, as he had also the fascinating little diary in which he had read so many things that were new and puzzling to him. His thoughts recurred to his approaching marriage with Mademoiselle Adelaide Chopard and he meditated long on the changes which that event would bring about in his manner of living. As a matter of fact, he was half afraid of what it would mean to him and began to regret his complaisance.

"After all," he mused, "I hope and intend always to do what is pleasing to myself. I must do what suits me and smoke all day in my own house if I wish. I am willing to maintain my wife in good style, to give her all that she can possibly ask for, and as my godfather says she loves me I shall rest assured on that point for I have no doubt whatever that the woman who loves her husband will soon be able to get used to the smell of his pipe."

Jean turned over and a faint perfume of jasmine and orange assailed his olfactory senses. He

sought for the cause of it, and perceived on a chair beside his bed the little silk bag which exhaled this sweet odor.

"Oh, it's that fashionable woman's little reticule," said Jean, rising, "these ladies must always put perfume in everything about them. That smells nice enough, however, it is rather like Papa Chopard's cream of orange-flower. By the way, I must take back that bag. No, suppose I send it, for the lady may perhaps think that I go myself in order that she may thank me again, and God knows there is nothing which wearies me more than thanks. However, should I send the bag by some one would they be able to find the lady? Might they not carry it to some one else who would keep it? No, I shall go myself; after all, I don't look like a person who comes to demand a suitable recompense and, as I have nothing to do from morning till night, I may just as well walk down the Rue Richer as anywhere else."

Jean did not deem it necessary to relate to his mother the adventures of the evening before. After breakfasting, he put the little bag and its contents into his pocket, and then went out to look for Madame Caroline Dorville's dwelling. Arrived at the Rue Richer, he asked for Madame Dorville at the first carriage-gate, and the porter answered,—

"Madame Dorville, I don't know her; it can't be here."

Jean was about to leave, but the porter recalled him, saying,—

"Tell me, then, monsieur, what is this lady? What does she do?"

"Have you a Madame Dorville in your house?" answered Jean brusquely.

"No, monsieur, but—"

"Well, then, what need have you of knowing what she does or what she does not do?"

And Jean departed from the house, leaving the porter to return to his lodge.

"He's a great fellow that," grumbled the latter, "he doesn't want to say anything himself and he wants me to tell all I know. Does he suppose any one is going to bother about answering his questions and get no information in return?"

Jean went into another house, where he found a porter who gave him the same answer and asked the same questions and on whom he turned his heel also.

"It seems," said he to himself, "that curiosity is a part of their business. But all this doesn't tell me where this lady lives. Must I apply at all the doors in the street. Madame Dorville is not very well known in the neighborhood, which fact is very much to her credit. I am always suspicious of those women whom everybody knows."

But at the third door, where Jean applied, the porter answered him,—

"It is here, monsieur, go up to the second floor."

Jean ascended a fine staircase and rang as loud as if he were at his godfather's door, saying to himself, "This lady is perhaps not yet up, it is only half-past ten and these fashionable women are seldom visible so early."

A young maid opened the door, and Jean asked, in the unceremonious fashion which was usual to him,—

"Madame Caroline Dorville, does she live here?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is she in?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is she up?"

The servant looked at Jean, and seemed surprised at his manner, however, she answered him again,—

"Yes, monsieur, madame is up."

"I should like to speak to her."

"Your name, monsieur, if you please."

"My name will convey no information whatever to her. She does not know me. But what does that matter? Can't one speak to your mistress without telling his name first? By Jove, how much ceremony!"

"But, monsieur—"

"Go and tell her it is some one who comes to restore an article belonging to her."

The servant showed Jean into a pretty drawing-room and departed, saying that she would go and

inform her mistress. The young man threw himself on a handsome sofa, covered with crimson satin, and looked around him. The drawing-room was elegantly decorated with many handsome pictures, and a piano as well as a harp.

"Everything is in grand style," said Jean to himself, "a woman of the world, a coquette, and lackadaisical, no doubt. Although Mademoiselle Chopard is not very pretty, and although she puts on a blouse and makes cordials, I'd much rather have a woman like that than one of these fine ladies before whom one must be careful what one says for fear of offending her ear, and who only loves rustling gowns, compliments, finery, and —" Here Jean remembered the diary and the visit that the young lady had made to an attic in the Faubourg Saint-Martin, and then he bethought himself that one might be a woman of the world and still have some good qualities, and he said to himself, "I should hardly censure other people, I who do nothing for anybody from morning till night."

At this moment some one opened the door into the drawing-room, and a lady who might be from twenty to twenty-one years of age, advanced toward Jean. She was a little below medium height, her figure was elegant, the grace of her movements gave something seductive to her carriage. Her face was noble and sweet, her big brown eyes had a light which attracted one without dazzling and without forcing one to lower his own; on the

contrary, their amiable expression gave one a desire to look at them again — these are the eyes which one loves to meet. A Greek nose, not too large; a mouth that was not too small; a rather pronounced color and well-pencilled eyebrows adorned a face which was oval in shape. She had a high forehead, shaded by beautiful light chestnut hair, the curls of which, arranged with great taste, formed big puffs on each side of this charming physiognomy.

This lady came towards Jean, who arose as she appeared. Very politely, though rather coldly, she asked him what he wanted. But Jean, in place of answering immediately, looked at the young woman closely for some moments, then exclaimed,—

"May the devil carry me away if I should have recognized you. True, it was dark yesterday evening, and you had those big bonnets on, under which it is impossible to see a face. No doubt you don't recognize me either."

The young woman looked at Jean and sought to recall his features, as she murmured,—

"Your voice is familiar, but I don't know — "

"By Jove! madame, it was I who, yesterday evening, in the Rue des Trois-Pavillons stopped a thief who was carrying away your shawl."

"What! was that you, monsieur? Pardon me that I could not place you."

"There is nothing to pardon, madame, and it

is probable you would never have heard of me again if I had not, on leaving you, found this little bag also, which is, or so I think, that which the robber took from you, and which he must have thrown away in his flight at the moment I seized him by the collar."

"What, monsieur; you have also had the kindness —"

"There is no kindness in that, madame, this bag belongs to you and I bring it back, it is very simple. Now I have much honor in —"

Jean bowed and made ready to depart, but Madame Dorville detained him. Since she had recognized in this gentleman, who expressed himself so cavalierly, the one of the evening before who had been her protector, her reserve had given way to a gracious and amiable manner, and it was no longer with cold politeness that she invited Jean to reseat himself for a moment and not to leave so quickly. Jean was little used to submit to the desires of a lady; however, the latter's tone was so sweet, her manner so engaging when begging him to remain, that Jean, who was for an instant uncertain what he wished to do, finally seated himself near Madame Dorville. The young woman, who in addition to her grace and attraction possessed much wit, together with much knowledge of the world, had seen at a glance that Jean was not in the least accustomed to society, so for fear of augmenting his embarrassment she

pretended not to notice him in order to put him more at ease. In fact, despite his habitual assurance, Jean, who had never found himself in similar company, had much trouble in expressing himself and felt very awkward seated near this beautiful refined woman.

"You also found this bag, monsieur?" said the young woman, who saw that she must begin to speak if she wished the conversation to have its course.

"Yes, madame, yes, on leaving you. After you had got into the cab I went back over the street where I had met you, and seeing something shine at my feet, I picked it up. I looked to see what was inside, and it was exactly what you had said —"

"And you had the politeness to bring it to me yourself! Really, monsieur, I owe you a thousand obligations."

"Oh, not at all, madame, there was no great politeness in that. In the first place, I have nothing to do, I loiter all day, spending the property of my father and my aunt. I don't know what to do from morning to night, which is sometimes confoundedly tedious."

Here the young lady repressed a slight grimace and drew her chair a little further from that of Jean.

"I thought I would rather bring this bag to you myself than confide it to some idiot who would make a mistake or fail to find you."

"But, monsieur, how did you know my name and address?"

This question embarrassed Jean for a moment, but at length he answered,—

"How did I know your name?"

"Yes, for you asked quite correctly for Madame Dorville, Caroline Dorville even, so you know my baptismal name; and I don't remember having said anything to you about it yesterday."

"That is true, madame, it was not you who informed me; but, as it was necessary that I should know it in order to return to you what belonged to you, by Jove, madame, after looking in the back of your diary to see if it did not contain some address, and finding none there, I looked in the book itself and read what is there."

The young woman blushed and lowered her eyes. Jean perceived it, and exclaimed,—

"That annoys you perhaps, madame, but I had no other means of obtaining the information."

A slight smile reappeared on Caroline's features, and she answered Jean kindly,—

"I have no fault to find with you, monsieur; you have done what was necessary under the circumstances. I confess, however, that I did not expect that some thoughts, some notes taken at hazard, would be seen by a stranger; and you must confess that it is odd, monsieur."

The pretty woman could not keep from smiling,

and Jean, who believed that she was thinking of what he had read, answered,—

"Why, yes, there were some odd things in it."

There was a moment's silence, the young woman seemed to reflect, perhaps she was trying to recall all that was in her diary. As to Jean, he contented himself with looking at Madame Dorville, then he glanced at the pictures, and involuntarily hummed to himself, as was his habit. The young lady looked stealthily at him for a moment, and a slight smile appeared again as she looked. Jean muttered, while looking at a picture which was opposite him,—

"That's very good, very good indeed. What is the subject of it? is it some individual who is taken ill in a church?"

"It is the 'Death of Tasso,' monsieur."

"Oh, it's the 'Death of Tasso.' I don't know that fine fellow. He's all in black. He looks like a doctor of the neighborhood."

Madame Dorville bit her lips and looked at Jean in surprise. But the latter perceived nothing and continued his remarks, exclaiming,—

"Oh, here is something more cheerful. They are dancing in that one. No doubt that is a festival, but from the costume of all these people I presume that it is taking place during a carnival."

"That is the 'Wedding of Thetis and Peleus.'"

"Thetis and Peleus! What confounded names for a married couple."

"Those are gods."

"Oh, they're gods. Well, then they are very ugly gods. Peleus, that is probably this fat fellow over there who has no hair on his head; and that other disguised as the devil, who has put on a red queue and some horns, is no doubt the groomsman of the wedding, playing some jokes."

"That is Discord, monsieur. You are not acquainted with the 'Judgment of Paris,' then?"

"The 'Judgment of Paris.' No, I know a Pâris in my own neighborhood who is a wine merchant, but I don't think he has ever been judged in any matter."

The pretty woman could contain herself no longer. She burst into peals of laughter, and Jean, turning toward her, said quietly,—

"Are you laughing at me, madame?"

Madame Dorville looked at Jean for a moment, then she answered him,—

"Yes, monsieur."

"Ah, I have said something stupid, then?"

"I don't say that, monsieur; but — well, monsieur, will you excuse me if I am rather frank?"

"Excuse you, on the contrary, I shall thank you for it. There is nothing that I love more than frankness, that puts me immediately at my ease; and you must see, madame, that I am not a man of ceremony. What did you wish to say to me, madame?"

"That I am very much astonished, monsieur,

at your ignorance as to things that everybody knows, and that surprises me the more because you tell me that you have no occupation; that is to say, you have no occupation which takes all your time."

"No, madame. My name is Jean Durand; I am an only son. My father was an herbalist in the Rue Saint-Paul, and very highly esteemed, I flatter myself. He spoke Latin and was deeply learned in the properties of herbs. He wanted to make a learned man of me, but, by Jove, I did not take to it. It bored me to remain seated on the benches of a school, I liked much better to run about the streets, for I have always loved to be as free as the sparrows; in short, my father whipped me to make me learn botany, but my mother kissed me, gave me money, and always told me that I knew enough. My poor father is dead, he had no reason to be pleased with me, and that is what grieves me. I have only my mother now, who for a long time has retired from business. I have twelve thousand livres income, and I spend it as I can, in walking with one and another, smoking and playing at billiards. Now, madame, you know me as well as if we had lived together ten years."

Jean's frankness pleased Caroline, who answered,—

"You have followed your own likings; each one is at liberty to do as he pleases."

"Yes, madame, and it pleased me to do nothing."

"You have preferred a free life to the pleasure which one enjoys in the world, in society, where with such an ample income you could have occupied a very agreeable rank."

"What, do you think that I can't go into society when it pleases me?"

"Oh, I didn't say that, monsieur. Why, it was you who gave me to understand that the usages, the customs of society bored you."

"Why, what will you? I find it very unpleasant to remain seated for hours talking about indifferent things; to be obliged to dress carefully, to rise every moment to bow, to be careful not to swear. Do you find all that so very amusing, madame, yourself?"

The young woman smiled again at the question, and answered Jean,—

"All depends on the direction which we give to our tastes, monsieur. In infancy we like pleasure. My parents directed my tastes to find it in the study of music, of drawing, of history. The conversation of persons who encouraged my immature talent was recreation for me, and I found many charms in society, where I enjoyed the intellect of others and tried to acquire new acquaintances, who would prevent me from feeling too much out of place in the society in which I should live."

Jean shook his head and muttered,—

"That is correct; as you say, everything depends upon the direction of the tastes. But I believe we shall have rain today."

The pretty woman bit her lips again, while Jean looked at the ceiling, and did not know what to make of her. They remained for some moments silent, then Madame Dorville rose, and bowing graciously to Jean, said to him,—

"I shall ever be grateful, monsieur, for the service you have rendered me, and my friend also. When you are passing in this neighborhood, I hope that you will often come in for a few moments."

Jean understood this compliment to mean that it was time for him to go. He arose, made the best bow that was possible to him, and murmured,—

"Madame, certainly, with great pleasure; besides, for me I can — don't disturb yourself — I can easily find the door."

In the midst of these phrases, Jean, who felt very much embarrassed in spite of himself, directed his steps toward the kitchen, and instead of going out went into a pantry; but the maid who was there hastened to show him the way and opened the door for him, Jean bowed again, took off and replaced his hat three times, and breathed freely when the door on the landing was at length closed on him.

"By Jove! how stupid of me to be so embarrassed as that before a woman," said Jean to himself as he returned to his own neighborhood. "I can't understand why I should be so, for whether a woman wears a cap or her hair, whether she wears a silk dress or a cotton one, is she not still a woman? However, despite myself, I felt like a clown before that Madame Dorville, who is very polite and very pleasing, if you can say pleasing of such affected manners; but no, although she seemed affected, she had no pretension, she was very good-natured despite her fine toilet. Moreover she is pretty, she is very pretty, I must render her that justice; a sweet face, blue eyes, brown, I believe, I didn't notice the color much, but I know that they are very charming. Mademoiselle Chopard has big goggle eyes which, compared with this lady's, have the same effect upon me as a glass eye after an actual one. Then I don't think that this lady thinks, as does Mademoiselle Adelaide, that I am well-informed; at any rate, she didn't so impress me. Certainly, in order to find me well-informed she must know nothing except the flavor of peach stones. This lady has also a very agreeable voice; it seems to me that one could talk much longer with a person who has a sweet voice, it does not tire one to listen. It is not like Mademoiselle Chopard's, who could command the manœuvres of a regiment on the Plain of Sablons. That's a voice —

I don't know how to explain it — it's strange that there are some voices which it is pleasant to listen to even when they are saying only very simple things."

Jean had already arrived at home, for in thinking of the dame of the diary he had not perceived the length of the way.

While Jean is making his reflections on the person he has just left, we will set ourselves to making ours also; is there anything better than the acquaintance of a pretty woman, above all, when to her charms she seems to add the qualities of the mind?

CHAPTER II

Caroline

While Jean was making his reflections upon the person with whom he found himself, let us do the same thing ourselves also; it is always agreeable to make the acquaintance of a pretty woman, exceptionally so is it the case when to the charms of her person are added those of mind and character.

Caroline was the daughter of a rich merchant named Grandpré, who was so entirely absorbed in his business that he had but few moments to give to his wife and his daughter, though he was reasonably fond of both of them. Madame Grandpré made amends for this indifference on the part of her husband by worshipping Caroline, and having herself received a good education she carefully supervised that of her daughter.

Caroline had music and drawing masters and instructors in foreign languages; her mother's lessons, the caresses with which her progress was recompensed, and her great facility for study caused her to rapidly surmount the difficulties which in the arts as well as in the sciences are not overcome without trouble. Caroline became a good musician, she sang agreeably, accompanying herself to

perfection on the harp or the piano, and she drew with taste; her mother was proud of her talents, and often said to her husband,—

"Our daughter is charming, she has a thousand talents and above all she is good and modest."

"So much the better, so much the better," answered M. Grandpré, "I shall marry her well. She must have at least thirty thousand livres income."

One may see that for M. Grandpré, as for the greater part of the human race, money was everything. Madame Grandpré was not entirely of his way of thinking. She thought that Caroline was pretty enough to inspire love, and she wished that the future husband with thirty thousand livres income, who would certainly present himself before long, should be a handsome young man, capable of inspiring her daughter with love.

As to Caroline, being at that time only fifteen years of age and always with her mother, she thought very vaguely about marriage and hardly dared to dream of love, which she knew only by name. Often going with her parents into society, to a ball or party, undoubtedly some of the gallant young men had already addressed to her some of those flattering remarks which cause the least coquettish girl to blush with pleasure and awaken new thoughts in an innocent mind, which asks itself if there are not sweeter things to hear. But while giving herself up freely to the pleasures of

her age, Caroline still included her mother in all her plans for happiness.

At this epoch a considerable failure, in which M. Grandpré found himself involved, almost entirely ruined his family. That is to say, there remained to them of all their fortune only about three thousand livres income. While many people would think themselves rich with such a sum, there are others who would imagine themselves ruined; everything depends upon the position which one occupies in society.

M. Grandpré could not support this reverse. Habituated to doing a large business, to speculating, to all the advantages given by opulence, he could not reconcile himself to the idea of becoming again a man in simple circumstances, to no longer make a sensation on 'Change, to no longer occupy his mornings in scolding his clerks, signing letters and giving orders. People who have no real merit in themselves cannot sustain a reverse of fortune; they feel their weakness; they feel that, deprived of this or that which gave them assurance and confidence, they will no longer amount to anything and will drop to the earth like balloons which the wind no longer sustains. Six weeks after this failure M. Grandpré died of the shock which it had given him.

The only remaining consolation of her mother, Caroline redoubled her care, her zeal, her tenderness; every day she said to her,—

"Mamma, since we have still a thousand crowns of income we are not poor; however, if you think that is not enough, I will work, I will make use of my talents, I will give music lessons; you have told me a hundred times that an accomplishment is a resource in adversity, and that only foolish people are ashamed to make use of it."

Madame Grandpré kissed her daughter and answered her,—

"We have quite enough to live upon, dear Caroline, without the employment of your talents; if that were necessary I should not be ashamed of it. Heaven be thanked, the prejudice which formerly weighed upon musicians has departed with others which time and reason have removed. But with a thousand crowns we can still live honorably; we shall no doubt have to make some reform in our manner of dressing, some economies in regard to our pleasures. If I regret our wealth it is because of you, my daughter, for I believe you were called to take a high place in the world, where you were undoubtedly made to shine."

"Shall I not always be happy with you, and can I ever feel lonely with the accomplishments which I owe to you? Oh, I really think, mamma, that they are true riches, since they charm our leisure, stand to us in adversity and even furnish us with the means of providing for our existence."

The mother and daughter settled down to live upon the money that remained to them. Caroline

spoke no untruth in saying that she should be as happy as when they were wealthy. At sixteen years of age one requires so little, so few things for happiness; a walk, some music with some friends whom they had kept, a theatre party, were great pleasures for Caroline. It is true that when they went into society they wore much simpler dresses, and they wore the same hats for a long time; but when one is pretty one is not less so in modest attire than in a dainty toilet. Sometimes one even looks more pleasing. Caroline always heard a flattering murmur when she entered the drawing-room or when she took part in a contra-dance. The words, "How good-looking she is, how graceful," often reached her ears, and without being vain one always knows to whom such things are addressed. Could she, then, regret anything when she read in all eyes that she lacked nothing?

Madame Grandpré was less philosophical than her daughter, because she had passed the age of illusion, or rather, because in growing old we need a great deal to be moderately happy. It was painful to her to go afoot after having had her barouche; to be lodged on a third floor in a simple apartment after having lived on the first floor of a spacious residence; and to have only one maid instead of four servants. She sighed as she went upstairs, and from time to time an exclamation escaped her which proved to Caroline that her mother regretted her fortune. Caroline would then run into

her mother's arms and try to comfort her. Madame Grandpré, however, assured her daughter that she was mistaken as to the cause of her sighs; but Caroline could see very well that her mother was trying to deceive her.

At length Madame Grandpré, who in her prosperous days had wished first of all that her daughter's husband should be young and handsome, one who could inspire her with love, now said to herself,—

"Oh, she will never find a husband with thirty thousand livres income."

Thus do we change with events, and it has been well said that we are weathercocks; but if no change occurs in our situation, our fortune, or in that of our friends, it remains to be seen whether we shall change our sentiments.

Caroline still went often into society with her mother, the latter hoping that her daughter would find there a good match, and that her grace, her accomplishments, her wit would compensate for her lack of fortune. Madame Grandpré was not mistaken; while girls with dowries are usually sought after, those who join to the charms of face and figure accomplishments, wit, and that sweetness, that modesty which one admires above everything in a young person, these latter also find husbands. It would be very unfortunate if money alone should make marriages, and if virtue and grace counted for nothing in an engagement

destined to acquaint us with the sweetest sentiments of nature.

M. Dorville met Mademoiselle Grandpré in society; he was at first greatly attracted by her charming face, later on he was further enslaved by the talents with which Caroline seemed only to seek to render herself agreeable to her friends, without a single vain idea or thought. M. Dorville was astonished to find so many attractions, so much merit and modesty blended; however, he wished to study Caroline's disposition for some time, in order to assure himself that what was so seductive in society rested upon those solid qualities which alone render one happy in private life. The result of M. Dorville's observations was always to Caroline's advantage, and he resolved to make her his wife.

M. Dorville was a man of fifty years, a former officer of marines, of a rather grave address, presenting a rather unamiable physiognomy, but a noble and imposing bearing. He had forty thousand livres income, and a decoration which he had well earned. At fifty years of age, when one is wise, one does not dream of being sentimental with a young person of sixteen; one may please her, may obtain her hand in marriage, but one should not flatter himself that he can inspire her with an ardent affection. M. Dorville, who was neither foolish nor fatuous, did not make the slightest allusion to all that; he went to Madame Grandpré

direct and began, where true lovers end, by asking for mademoiselle's hand.

Madame Grandpré was very much flattered by this demand. M. Dorville bore an honorable name, he had forty thousand livres income and was therefore a very good match for her daughter. It was more than she had dared to hope for. It is true that M. Dorville was fifty years of age and that he was not a handsome man; but since she had lost her fortune, Madame Grandpré did not stick at such trifles as these; however, she promised nothing to M. Dorville, she did not wish to constrain her daughter, but she allowed him to see how delighted she should be to call him her son-in-law.

When, later, Caroline learned from her mother that the person who wished to marry her was M. Dorville she made a slight grimace and did not appear greatly delighted at her conquest. Madame Grandpré dwelt on all the advantages of this union, which would assure Caroline's fortune, and the honorable reputation, the probity of M. Dorville. All this was, no doubt, very fine, but at sixteen years of age the most virtuous damsel sometimes thinks of love and marriage, and in the dreams of her youthful imagination honor and probity are not sufficient to captivate her heart. Caroline answered her mother that she did not wish to marry, and that she was perfectly happy with her upon what they had left to them.

Madame Grandpré did not insist, but Caroline perceived that her mother was often sad, discontented, sulky; she concluded that Madame Grandpré experienced some mortification at her refusal of M. Dorville's hand, and always good, always ready to sacrifice her desires to those of others, Caroline said to her mother that, having reflected upon it, she was willing to accept the husband who had presented himself. A month later she was Madame Dorville.

Madame Grandpré lived with her daughter and her son-in-law. If Caroline did not experience for her husband that gushing affection which is the fruit of reciprocal love, at least she felt for him a sincere friendship; and she enjoyed anew all the advantages resulting from wealth. Madame Grandpré was for two years the witness of a union where a difference in age had never caused a single quarrel, and she died tranquil as to the future of her daughter.

But a year later M. Dorville, with whom hunting was a dominating passion, became the victim of the awkwardness of one of his friends and received a ball that was destined for a hare. Caroline thus found herself at the age of nineteen a widow and entirely her own mistress, with an income in the neighborhood of seventeen thousand livres.

Marriage gives to youth a rank and an assured position in the world. A widow of nineteen holds a very different place to that occupied by a girl

of the same age. With her fortune, her beauty, and her accomplishments, M. Dorville's young widow had numerous adorers and many aspirants for the honor of filling her deceased husband's place; but having passed her springtime in doing the will of others, Caroline resolved to follow her own feelings and not to renounce her liberty without consulting her heart.

We are now acquainted with Caroline. Let us add to these details that she was now nearly twenty-one years of age, that mingling with the world and her position in society had given her that assurance, that pleasing confidence which allowed her wit more freedom, gave more gayety to her disposition, and permitted the beauty to make use of all the advantages which she had received from nature. Caroline had not become a coquette, but she was not ashamed to please, she did not make any advances to attract homage, but she did not repulse it; in fact she was one of those charming women who are the delight of the society which they frequent.

After receiving Jean's visit, Caroline's first care was to turn over the leaves of her diary. She knew well that it contained nothing for which she could blush, but she wished to know what she could have put there which could have informed him as to her name and her address.

Caroline smiled as she reread some passages on the fashions and toilets, and said to herself,—

"All this must have seemed very frivolous to this young man, who hasn't at all the appearance of a man of fashion, who hasn't even enough of it. It's a pity that, with naturally prepossessing manners and a face which is not at all bad, he should have no education; but what manners! what deportment! what ignorance in regard to the most simple things!"

Caroline found the verses which had been addressed to her and said to herself,—

"That's how he came to know my name, it is what M. Valcourt wrote in my diary one day when I forgetfully left it on my centre table. This gentlemen could not have learned much from these verses; however, he did learn they were addressed to the owner of the diary, and my address — oh, here it is, this memorandum on a lodging for Hortense. That wasn't so awkward! Despite his ignorance, I don't think he's lacking in wit. The poor fellow, he did not know how to go; if I had not risen he would have stayed until tomorrow."

At this moment the maid announced Madame Beaumont, and a lady of forty years came into Madame Dorville's drawing-room; the latter ran towards her exclaiming,—

"I am very much pleased to see you."

"My dearest, I came to learn whether you had recovered from our fright of yesterday; as for me I confess to you that I slept very badly last night. I had my maid sleep in my apartment and look

five or six times under my bed and in my closets; but, all the same, I thought I saw thieves everywhere and I dreamed that three of them fell down my chimney."

"I slept very well, I assure you; but you don't know what followed our adventure."

"Why, what followed?"

"Well, look here, here's my bag, my purse, my diary; I didn't lose anything."

"Oh, good heavens, what does that mean?"

"Somebody came and brought me all those."

"Who, the thief?"

"Oh, no, but that gentleman who snatched my cloak from the robber and squired us to a carriage."

"Well, what then?"

"Well, then, he found my bag also in repassing through the streets and he came to bring it back to me."

"Oh, that's very singular, my dearest. Can this man be a police spy?"

"Oh, what an idea, he's quite young — a man to whom I owe so great an obligation. Oh, if you had talked with him as I did you would not have such an idea."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Certainly, he came here himself, and he would not give up my bag to anyone except me."

"How does he look in daylight? I was so disturbed yesterday that I did not think of looking at him."

"Why, he's not bad looking."

"He seemed tall to me."

"Yes, tall enough."

"Common looking, according to what I saw of him."

"No, not exactly common looking, but his manner, his tone were common; you could smell his pipe fifteen feet away."

"Oh, how horrid, and you could talk with him?"

"My dear, do you suppose that the odor of tobacco could diminish my sense of the service which he had rendered me?"

"No, certainly not, but I hate smoking so much it repels me at once."

"For the rest this young man is very original; he's not at all acquainted with the usages of society, he neither knows how to come into a drawing-room nor how to go out of it, but he has a frankness which is very pleasing. He immediately told me all about himself, his name is Jean Durand, his father, who was in trade, is dead; he lives with his mother and possesses twelve thousand livres income."

"Twelve thousand livres income and doesn't know how to present himself in society; that's unpardonable."

"He confessed to me that he had never wished to do anything or to learn anything."

"He must be very pleasing in a drawing-room, this gentleman."

"You may well imagine that he would not be pleasing there, he only knows how to smoke, to swear, and to play billiards."

"Oh, good heavens, he must be very unmannerly in his remarks."

"No, he was very polite, except that sometimes an oath escaped him."

"Oh, that would give me a nervous attack."

"However, after the service which he had rendered me, after the trouble which he had taken to come and bring me this bag, I believed it my duty to invite him to come and call when he is in the neighborhood; but I am fully persuaded that he will not come again and that he found nothing pleasing at my house."

"That's very fortunate for you, dearest. What could you do with such a man? He rendered us a great service yesterday, it is true, oh, yesterday it seemed to me as though he were a prince; but we have thanked him for it and one can't, for such a thing as that, become intimate with people who are not congenial."

Caroline did not answer, some new visitors came in, and they did not talk any further about M. Jean.

CHAPTER III

The Second Visit to Madame Dorville

When Jean got home he found Bellequeue there, the latter having come from the Chopards' to invite his godson to spend the evening in company with him at those worthy people's house.

"You must go there more, my dear fellow," added Bellequeue, "for now that you are engaged to the superb Adelaide you owe her some little attentions."

"My dear godfather," answered Jean, "I've already told you that gallantry is quite out of my line. I'll marry this Adelaide, who's really a fine woman, that is understood; but I'll pay her no little attentions, because that isn't at all in my line, and besides —"

"Besides what?"

"Besides—well nothing that would interest you much, only it bores me to be always talking to her, always joking."

"Ah, rascal, you are hiding your play."

"I am hiding nothing at all, I assure you," said Jean.

"But the Chopards are assured and Adelaide herself asserts that you are a little in love with her,

but that you hide your feelings. All the same, you please her thus, she adores you, and that is the essential thing. You will have a fond wife, and as you will always be well provided with liqueurs — what are you thinking of, my dear fellow?"

"Nothing, godfather."

"Well, that happens to me sometimes also. Then I shall see you tonight at the Chopards'?"

Jean thought all day of Madame Dorville, of the little diary, of the visit which he had paid to the pretty woman, of the conversation which he had had with her, and from time to time he said to himself, "In the world, in what they call good society, where they pass their time in talking of light and indifferent things, it must be very tiresome. I did not feel bored this morning at that lady's, strangely enough; the time passed so quickly, oh, I stayed longer than I ought, I should be there now if she had not risen to dismiss me, it seems it's not good form to make such long visits."

In the evening Jean went mechanically to the Chopards'. Mademoiselle Adelaide reproached him tenderly because he had been absent for three days; she even gave him a little tap on the cheek. Jean let her tap him and said nothing. Mademoiselle Adelaide pinched him, and still he said nothing, but he heaved a slight sigh and kept his eyes fixed on the floor. Mademoiselle Adelaide said to herself,—

"He is taken, he is certainly in love, I knew well that that would come." Jean's sigh had rendered Mademoiselle Chopard childishly gay, and her parents concluded that the young people were very well satisfied one with the other. Bellequeue, who was always trying to animate his godson, heard Mademoiselle Adelaide say to her mother,—

"My future husband is very pleasing this evening."

"I thought him less cheerful than usual," answered Madame Chopard.

"Exactly, that is just what I want; it's love that makes him melancholy and absent-minded. Oh, I shall tease him well now, I am going to amuse myself in my turn."

And Mademoiselle Adelaide came and went, jumping about the room. She ran from one to the other, shouted with laughter for a mere nothing, was not silent for a moment. Jean looked at her sometimes with an expression that was anything but admiring, then he paid no more attention to her, while Papa Chopard said to Bellequeue,—

"My daughter is in her element; with her pranks and her coquetry, she already knows her power pretty well. Oh, the women! When love is in the question, there is no thought of anything else."

Jean took no part in the conversation and was still thinking of his adventure of the evening

before. He wished to laugh and chat as usual, but despite himself he was absent-minded and his thoughts carried him elsewhere. M. Chopard joked him, asked him what had made him so preoccupied, and Jean told him what had happened to him the evening before in the Rue des Trois-Pavillons, because he experienced some pleasure in speaking of it. Everybody praised the young man's courage.

"To stop a robber alone," cried M. Chopard. "Suppose he had been armed?"

"You exposed yourself terribly," said Madame Chopard.

Jean shrugged his shoulders. Bellequeue alone found that his godson's conduct had been entirely natural.

"For all that," said Adelaide, "those ladies could not have been any great thing or they would not have been out alone in the evening."

"That's true," said M. Chopard, "alone, and without a cavalier. You were very good to expose yourself for them."

Jean glanced impatiently at his betrothed and muttered, "Mademoiselle, I know what I was doing." Highly displeased by what they had said of the ladies whom he had encountered he did not speak of his visit to Madame Dorville's, and hastened to bid the Chopard family good-night.

Several days passed; Jean was less cheerful than usual, he went to the café and played at billiards

according to his habit, but he found himself bored there, and remained but a short time. When he went to the Chopards' he sometimes sat silent for a quarter of an hour. Mademoiselle Adelaide was more than ever convinced that it was love for her which rendered her sweetheart melancholy and preoccupied, and Madame Chopard said to her daughter,—

"My dearest, it will perhaps be necessary to hasten your marriage by some days, or your betrothed will die of love."

"So much the better, so much the better," said Mademoiselle Adelaide; "I have sighed, it is his turn, let me enjoy my triumph."

"That is right," said M. Chopard, "she has sighed under her breath, and it is for her future husband to sigh aloud."

Jean did not know himself why he was so dismal, so tired of what had formerly amused him. The image of Madame Dorville presented itself often to his thoughts, and he got out of temper with himself for thinking of a woman whom he hardly knew.

"She's very pretty," he said to himself often, "she is charming — but what does that matter to me, since I shall not see her again? Still, did she not invite me to go and see her? But what should I go there for, into those beautiful drawing-rooms where everything is so ceremonious, where one must sit down and rise leisurely. Pshaw, I will

not think any more of it; it would not suit me at all."

He went one morning to Bellequeue's, where he had not been for a long time. Bellequeue was not at home; he had gone to pay some visits to the neighbors. Being no longer jealous of his godson, whom he believed to be entirely occupied with Mademoiselle Chopard, the former hairdresser exercised less surveillance over the little maid, and left her alone without any uneasiness. It was Rose, then, who opened the door to Jean, and started with surprise at seeing him.

"What, is it you, M. Jean?"

"Yes, Rose, it is me."

"Really, I can't remember how long it is since I saw you."

"Is my godfather not in?"

"No, monsieur. No doubt you came to see him?"

This question was put with a little air of vexation, to which Jean paid no attention, but went into a room and seated himself in an armchair. The little maid followed, arranging the curls of her hair and adjusting more symmetrically the corners of her handkerchief.

"Do you know, M. Jean, that you have not been here since —"

"Oh, I know I have not been here for some time," answered Jean, apparently unconscious of Rose's pouts.

"It was the day monsieur came in so suddenly while we were talking. You were the cause of my getting a good scolding; but then, why did you say that you had kissed me? One doesn't talk about those things."

"Pshaw, this is all foolishness," said Jean.

"How foolishness? why, monsieur was red with anger. For that matter, I understand that is all the same to you. When one has anything on his mind one forgets trifles. Ah, well, it is because you are going to be married that you are so serious now, I suppose. Really, I did not recognize you; you used to be so cheerful. Mademoiselle Adelaide should be proud of having made you so much in love as all that."

Jean looked at Rose, "Mademoiselle Chopard has made me in love with her, do you say?"

"That is what they say everywhere; besides, it is very easy to see that something is the matter with you. But you ought to look more cheerful, since you are going to marry your sweetheart. It's odd, but it has very much astonished me, this marriage. Yes, I don't know why, I would not have believed it; I know that Mademoiselle Adelaide is a fine woman — a little too big, I'll allow. As to her face, that is all a matter of taste. There are some people who assert that she looks like a man, a big nose, ox's eyes, square chin, and the eyebrows of a sapper — but it is all the same; she may be very good-looking for all that."

Jean did not seem to listen to what Rose was saying, but all of a sudden he exclaimed,—

"Ah, if you knew how pretty she is."

"My God, monsieur, I told you that I know that," answered Rose, ill-humoredly, "but I don't see much about her to go into an ecstacy over."

"You know her?" said Jean, looking at Rose in surprise. "No, Rose, you do not know her."

"Come, now, do you say that I don't know Mademoiselle Chopard?"

"Who the devil is talking about Mademoiselle Chopard?" cried Jean, stamping his feet.

Rose looked at Jean in surprise, then she said,—

"What, monsieur, then it was not she of whom you were speaking when you said that she was so pretty?"

"No, Rose, no; it was another person, a young lady."

"A young lady?"

"And it is she who is charming."

"And who is this young lady?"

"I am going to tell you that, Rose."

Saying these words, Jean took the little maid by the apron and made her sit on his knee.

"Well, now, monsieur, what are you doing? what do you make me sit there for — a man who is going to be married?"

"Come, Rose, sit still and listen to me. By Jove, it is not a question of joking."

"Oh, I see that well."

Mademoiselle pouted as she said this, but she remained on Jean's knee while he related to her very much in detail his nocturnal adventure and his visit to Madame Dorville's. She listened attentively. Rose was shrewd; she saw the pleasure which Jean felt in talking of Madame Dorville, and she put a thousand questions to him on the subject.

"She is a very pretty woman, then, monsieur?"

"Oh, yes, Rose, a face that pleases immediately, and you know that I am not gallant, and notice women very little, at least."

"Yes, at least, unless they are very good-looking. And she is young?"

"Why, twenty years old, I suppose."

"Tall?"

"Well, medium height, but so well made and such a good carriage."

"She was well dressed?"

"Yes, elegantly dressed."

"What gown had she on?"

Jean gave a start of impatience which made Rose jump.

"Do you think I amused myself by feeling the stuff of her gown. I told you that she was a lady; a fashionable woman, in fact."

"But you haven't spoken of this visit to the Chopards, have you?"

"My faith, no, why should I?"

"Certainly, you are the master of your own actions, and you would be very foolish to do anything that displeases you. And did you go back to this lady?"

"No, do you think that I could return there, Rose?"

"Why not, didn't this lady invite you to go? You have rendered her a service; she will be very pleased to see you again. That's all very simple, and it seems to me that it will be a very agreeable acquaintance for you."

"You think so, Rose? What, you think so?"

And Jean delightedly squeezed Rose in his arms and kissed her several times, and the little maid allowed him to kiss her, exclaiming,—

"Will you have done; if monsieur should come in, he will believe that — dear knows we've been very well behaved."

But Jean, kissing Rose once again, arose suddenly,—

"My faith, you are right, I will go and see Madame Dorville."

"Go, go, monsieur," said Rose to Jean, who went off running. Then the little maid said to herself, as she rubbed her hands,—

"Oh, I am so pleased to know that. I can see what will come of this. Ah, M. Bellequeue, you'll make marriages again without consulting me. We shall see, M. Jean is no more in love with Mademoiselle Chopard than he is with my thumb.

That's all right, I can't bear these Chopards, who seem to look upon me as a servant."

Jean returned home. When he had resolved upon anything, he had to do it instantly. He had decided to go on the same day to Madame Dorville's, but he recalled the elegance of the mistress of the house and, for the first time in his life, Jean thought of his dress. When he had first gone to the Rue Richer, he had gone, according to his custom, very negligently dressed. This time he wished to be very well dressed. "At any rate," said he, "I am in easy circumstances and I don't see why I should dress like a college fag. I want this lady to see that I can get myself up as well as another." Jean put on new trousers, well-blacked shoes, a white waistcoat, and tried to make a pretty knot in his cravat, but as he was not in the habit of doing so, he could not accomplish what he wished. He grew vexed, stamped his feet, tore three cravats, and his mother came into the room to know what was the matter with him.

"I can't manage to tie my cravat," said Jean in despair.

"Wait, my dear Jean, don't be so impatient; I'll arrange it for you."

The good mamma easily enough made a bow for her son. Unfortunately, bows were no longer in fashion, but Jean did not know that, and he thought it all right. He put on a pretty blue

coat, and, a thing that he had never done before, stopped before a glass, passed his fingers through his hair, curled it a little on the side, then took his hat and went out, leaving his mother in an ecstasy, as she exclaimed,—

"Certainly, he is in love, poor Jean. Mademoiselle Chopard can flatter herself on being the first for whom he has ever made a similar toilet."

Jean took a cab in order that he might not get his boots muddy and that he might get there sooner. Arrived at the Rue Richer, in front of Madame Dorville's, he jumped lightly from the cab, paid the driver, and went up to the house. Then his heart beat, he experienced an uneasiness for which he could give no reason, and he tremblingly demanded of the porter if Madame Dorville was in.

"Of course, madame is at home, monsieur," answered the porter.

"How is this lady going to receive me?" thought Jean, mounting the staircase slowly. "Perhaps she will think my coming very singular. However, she invited me to come again. What shall I say to her. I shall ask her first how she is. That is very simple. It seems to me that I am well enough dressed to present myself in a drawing-room, besides — confound it all, how stupid it is to be all upset because I am going to see some one. I mustn't be as I was before, awkward and embarrassed; after all, am I not the equal of that

lady and all her acquaintances; come, here goes." Jean was in front of the door; he rang, the servant opened it.

"Madame Dorville," said Jean, deepening his voice to give himself assurance.

"Madame is in," said the maid, "your name, monsieur."

The maid opened the door into the drawing-room, and announced, "M. Jean Durand."

It was two o'clock in the afternoon, the hour when people in society are in the habit of receiving their visitors, and there were then in Madame Dorville's drawing-room her friend, Madame Beaumont, two very elegant young women, and a foppish dandified young man, who was rather a handsome fellow, but had too much the air of knowing it.

Upon hearing M. Jean Durand announced, Caroline seemed to experience a momentary difficulty in recalling the identity of the person who bore this name, the dandy arose, and the ladies turned their heads towards the door to see this gentleman who was completely unknown to them and whose name evidently piqued their curiosity.

While trying to assume an air of assurance, Jean was as red as a turkey-cock. He held his hat in one hand and in the other his gloves, which he thought it more distinguished not to put on, and he did not know which foot to put first. He decided and advanced with a brisk step, but at the

sight of all these faces, which had their eyes on him, Jean did not know where he was; he recoiled to one side, not seeing Madame Dorville, wished to bow, and felt that he struck a table, and while avoiding the table he overturned a chair, then his feet caught in a carpet, and in disengaging them from the carpet he drew it with him, and as a matter of course, the pieces of furniture which were upon it fell about the room, when the dandy ran toward him, exclaiming,—

"Oh, monsieur, stop, for pity's sake; don't budge, I'll disentangle you."

Jean was no longer in a state to budge, he was stunned, his hat and gloves had escaped his hands, he did not stoop to pick them up, he heard the stifled laugh of the ladies, but he did not see them. All this was the matter of a moment. Caroline, who had recognized Jean, had arisen to meet him, the fop had taken him by the hand and got him away from the carpet. Madame Dorville came with an amiable manner to bow to Jean and ask him about his health. Jean tried to recover himself and murmured,—

"By Jove, madame, I beg your pardon if I have upset —"

"Oh, monsieur, that is nothing — pray be seated."

Caroline motioned him to a chair, upon which he threw himself like a poor sailor who at last gets into port. However, his hat and gloves still

embarrassed him and he passed them alternately from the left to the right hand.

"It is very amiable of you, monsieur, to remember where I live," said Caroline, who sought to dissipate Jean's embarrassment by engaging him in conversation.

"I have not forgotten it, madame, and I should have come sooner, if I had thought, if I had believed —"

"You are perhaps going to the country," said Caroline quickly, for she perceived that Jean did not know how to finish his sentence.

"No, madame, I am remaining in Paris."

"And you, dearest, when are you going to your estate," said Madame Dorville to one of the young ladies, in order to make the conversation general, for she could see that the ladies were examining Jean curiously, and that M. Valcourt, for so the dandy was called, could hardly keep his eyes from him.

"I don't know when I shall go, really," answered the young lady affectedly, "I have so much still to do in Paris, and not a moment to myself; so many visits to make, so many purchases, so many preparations, and my husband will do absolutely nothing; oh, it is very annoying."

"Madame de Walen was furious yesterday. Just imagine, her husband took home with him twelve persons to dinner without giving her notice; men of note, too, academicians and men in office.

It was really too bad; two or three are well enough, but twelve!"

"M. Beaumont never does anything else; but, then, do you know what I do, ladies? I go out, and leave him to receive his company alone."

"Oh, that's very naughty."

"Madame Beaumont has always been famed for her strength of mind," said the dandy, balancing himself on his chair. "She would play Athalia well, or Agrippina."

"Oh, no, my nerves are too delicate."

During this conversation, M. Jean sometimes looked into vacancy and sometimes at his feet. He crossed and uncrossed his legs, and made all sorts of faces.

While balancing himself, M. de Valcourt examined Jean's dress, his carriage, and above all his big bow, and the ladies glanced at him significantly from time to time. Caroline, alone, who was always kind, always disposed to be indulgent, wished to find a way of putting Jean at his ease. However, she feared that if he should mingle in the conversation he would allow certain expressions to escape him which would be embarrassing. For his part, Jean wanted to talk but didn't know what to say; he looked at Caroline every time some one was looking at him.

"You didn't come to Madame Dorsan's last party," said one of the ladies to Caroline.

"Oh, my dear, you who are such an excellent

musician, how much you lost. They sang some very pretty songs."

"My faith, I didn't hear anything extraordinary," said the dandy. "Which one was it? was it that big young lady who sang that air from 'La Gazza' so cruelly out of tune? Or was it that gentleman who thinks that he has a fine bass voice, because he takes so much tobacco that he is perpetually hoarse? What, with Madame Quinville and her young brother, for whom she is trying to obtain a reputation as a singer so people will listen to herself when she sings, and Mademoiselle Herminie on the harp, it was deadly tiresome! nothing but the variations of 'Robin of the Wood,' and you know how she plays, no style, no brilliancy. As for that gentleman who played the guitar, you could imagine he sang as in the time of King Pepin the Short."

"Oh, M. Valcourt, how malicious you are."

"He is very sarcastic!"

"Me? Not at all. I say what every one saw; there is nothing so tiresome as bad music. I wager that monsieur here is of my opinion. Are you not?"

This question was addressed to Jean, who since his entrance had listened without saying a word. He turned toward Valcourt.

"My faith, bad music, I don't know bad music from good. I am quite an ignoramus about all those things."

A mocking smile flickered about the dandy's lips; the ladies looked at each other, and Caroline hastened to say,—

"There are some people who do not like music, nor does every one have time to spend on it. By the way, who has seen that new play at the Vaudeville? they say it is very good."

"Yes, it is not bad, there are some very well-turned couplets. I don't care for the denouement. Have you seen it, monsieur?"

It was the dandy who again addressed this question to Jean, maliciously trying to draw him out.

"I hardly ever go to the theatre," answered Jean, trying to gather a little assurance. "One has to remain seated to keep his place, and I find that plaguey bothersome."

The ladies all started in surprise. M. Valcourt looked at them, compressing his lips, and Jean, who thought that it was good tone to balance himself on his chair, threw himself back in it, and wriggled about, humming some little airs to give himself assurance; but, rather unused to this kind of exercise, he let himself go with too much abandon and fell chair and all into a pane of glass, which was shattered to pieces. This accident increased Jean's embarrassment, while the ladies and Valcourt muttered,—

"Here is a man who seems decided to break everything. This is a very pleasant gentleman to have in a drawing-room. What singular deport-

ment. And his dress! Ladies, be pleased to admire his bow. He used some expressions which were quite out of place. Where the deuce did Madame Dorville, who is excellent form herself, manage to pick up such an acquaintance?"

Caroline received Jean's excuses in regard to the pane of glass, and answered him,—

"It is my fault, I should have warned you that there is danger in balancing yourself thus. But you are not wounded, that is the essential thing."

Jean put his chair as far as possible from the window, which brought him near to the ladies, and Caroline, who divined the subject of the whisperings which were taking place, turned toward Madame Beaumont, saying,—

"By the way, my dear, I must present monsieur to you. You also owe him some thanks for the service which he rendered us when we were attacked one evening by a robber; for, although I alone was robbed, you then shared my fright."

"Why, what! is this the gentleman?" said Madame Beaumont, while the other persons for whom these words were an explanation, looked at Jean more kindly.

"Yes, dearest," resumed Caroline, "it was monsieur who stopped the robber and afterward gave us his arm as far as the cab stand. You should remember that then we were very much alarmed, and we felt very fortunate also in receiving the protection which monsieur so willingly afforded us."

Caroline paused lightly on these last words, Madame Beaumont inclined her head as she proffered her thanks, to which Jean answered,—

"It was not worth the trouble, madame, I should have done the same for the first comer."

M. Valcourt smiled mockingly again.

"Good heavens, what have they been doing in your house, my dear Caroline," said one of the young ladies who was seated near Jean, "don't you smell it? If it were winter, I should think that it was the chimney that was smoking."

"In fact, I also detect an odor of smoke," said Madame Beaumont.

"It is not that," said M. Valcourt, "what you smell is the odor of a pipe, to be frank."

"Of a pipe," cried the three ladies, making a gesture of disgust.

"Why, hang it, there is no doubt about it," cried Jean, "it is I who smell like that, this cursed odor of a pipe penetrates into the clothing. I have not, however, smoked today."

They answered nothing, but looked at him and made grimaces. Caroline herself seemed to share the general ill-humor. Two of the young ladies arose quickly and kissed Madame Dorville, saying to her, "Good-by, my dear, we must run away, we are in a hurry," and they departed without glancing at Jean.

The latter remained upon his chair. He did not swing himself, but held himself very straight

and followed all Caroline's movements with his eyes. The dandy soon arose also, and walked about the drawing-room, looked at himself in the glass, said some words in a whisper to Madame Beaumont, then kissed Madame Dorville's hand, presenting his homage to her, smiling in the most gracious manner, and departed with mincing steps. Jean had looked upon all this, still seated upon his chair, to which he seemed nailed. Madame Dorville returned to her seat beside Madame Beaumont, the conversation languished, the ladies exchanged but few words, and Jean dared not take part in what they said. He was still looking at Caroline, and while doing so said to himself,—

"If everybody goes, however, I shall have to leave also," and while saying that he could not decide to go, but at the end of five minutes Madame Beaumont exclaimed,—

"That odor of a pipe makes me horribly ill, it gives me a sick headache."

"Yes, that is true," answered Madame Dorville, faintly, "when one is not used to it."

These words had the effect of thunder upon Jean. He arose suddenly and bowed to Caroline, murmuring,—

"Pardon me, madame; if I had divined sooner that this odor was displeasing to you, I should long since have taken my departure."

"Why, monsieur, don't let that send you away," answered Caroline in a polite but cold tone.

"Oh, forgive me, madame, I can now see — I understand well — that in your house — it is necessary —"

While speaking Jean retreated towards the door, still looking at Madame Dorville. Suddenly, plaintive meowings were heard from a pretty cat, whose tail Jean had trod upon without perceiving it.

"Oh, I am d——d awkward today," cried Jean in despair, and while the pretty woman stooped to take the cat in her arms, he flung himself into the ante-room, just missed upsetting the maid, and left Madame Dorville's.

He went home in bad temper, he seated himself, he arose, he did not know what he wished to do. Then seeing the pipe he habitually used on the table he took it angrily and dashed it to pieces at his feet.

CHAPTER IV

Jean is in Love

Bellequeue, on going to see Madame Durand, had learned of the extraordinarily careful toilet her son had made before going out, and the pains he had taken in tying his cravat; and from this Bellequeue inferred that his godson was really very much in love, and that as a matter of course with the young lady to whom he was engaged to be married.

"You see," said he, "what a good idea was mine in thinking of this marriage. Jean will become a charming man."

"He is that already," answered Madame Durand tartly, for she had never underestimated her son.

"Yes, but he will be still more so now. He will be much more pleasing in society; already I fancy it is having an effect upon him, and he is growing neglectful of billiards, the cafés, and the gambling-houses," added the godfather.

"That seems so to me also."

"It is all the effect of love. You will see that Jean will become better balanced, steadier."

"It surprises me very much, though."

"And why should it? Mademoiselle Adelaide has said in confidence to her father and her mother, who repeated it to me, that before long she should see her future husband at her feet."

"I don't wish that she should make the dear fellow sigh any longer."

"Come, don't be uneasy. You know very well that marriage very quickly puts an end to all this sighing."

"Very much too quickly sometimes."

"It is only three weeks from now till the time appointed for their nuptials. This time will pass in oglings, pressings of the hand and sighs; the time when one is courting is very pleasant. Oh, my dear neighbor, that isn't the honeymoon, 'tis true, but there are some people who assure me that it is the sunny moon."

Bellequeue returned home, his thoughts already occupied with the toilet which he should make on the day of Jean's wedding, when he hoped to dance once more; and after he got into the house he stood before a glass and tried to remember some of the pretty steps which he had seen executed at M. Mistigris' balls.

Mademoiselle Rose looked mischievously at her master, and asked him what he was doing there.

"I am trying to remember a few dancing steps for Jean's wedding-day."

"Oh, is the wedding to be so soon, then?

"In three weeks."

"Then you have time to practice your capers."

"Not too much, and then one doesn't know, Jean is becoming so much in love that they may advance the day."

"Oh, M. Jean is in love with Mademoiselle Chopard?"

"Yes, my dear, in love to the point of being very much changed; quite melancholy, in fact. Only this morning he made a very unusual toilet, his mother thinks even — however, she did not assure me of that — that Jean had put pomatum on his hair. Why should that make you laugh?"

"Oh, it wasn't that, it was an idea which came into my head."

"You are vexed at seeing that the young people suit each other so well, when you asserted that this marriage was not well-arranged."

"I can assure you that I am not at all vexed about it. What is there in that that would make me so?"

"The self-love of a woman who always wants to be in the right. Come, I am going to my tailor's."

"What are you going there for?"

"To order some tight-fitting, black cassimere trousers, buttoned at the ankle, to wear at Jean's wedding."

"Monsieur, if you'll take my advice, you'll wait a while before going to order your tight-fitting trousers."

"Why should I do that?"

"Wait, I tell you; one never knows what may happen."

"Why, you hussy, you want to make me think still that Jean is not in love with Adelaide! I am going to order my trousers."

After breaking his pipe Jean had left the house. He walked at haphazard, having no determined object in view, and being wholly occupied with his morning visit at Madame Dorville's.

"She did not ask me to come again," mused Jean, sighing. "No doubt my presence was displeasing to her, I was as awkward as a clown. The singular part of it was I wished so much to appear self-possessed and at ease and I could not even advance or recede. I didn't know what to do with my arms or my legs or with any of my features except my eyes. I made good use of those, for I looked at her and she seemed to me much prettier than when I saw her last. She didn't smile at me so often and her manner hurt me, it was so cold. But her voice is ever sweet, I should delight in hearing it even if she were scolding me. By Jove, what a fool I am to be thinking of this lady whom I shall probably never see again, for she did not ask me to go there again and I can find no excuse for so doing. No, that's quite at an end — done with. What's the use of bothering myself about a woman I hardly know? a coquette? No doubt she's making fun of me now with her

friends. There was that dandy — had I been sure he was laughing at me I would have given him a hiding. But the truth is, I was so awkward I must have seemed a clown to them. What does it matter to me? I shall never see those people again. Madame Dorville I should have liked to see sometimes, but I'm out of place at her house, though I think I could be more at my ease with her alone."

After walking about for a long time Jean went into a restaurant and was served with dinner, but he had no appetite and could hardly touch anything. On leaving the restaurant he went into a theatre, to distract his thoughts; but, being unused to listening to the words of the play, he paid no attention to what was transpiring on the stage and remained plunged in thought. Vexed with himself, he left the place saying,—

"Let's go to the Chopards': there at least I shall be at home, they will talk to me on subjects that I understand. I must think no more of this lady; it is fruitless trouble."

Jean reached the Chopards' house at nearly ten o'clock in the evening; Bellequeue had gone there, thinking to see Jean in his grand toilet, which he had mentioned to Mademoiselle Adelaide, and the latter, seeing the time roll by without the arrival of her future husband, did not know what to think. At length Jean arrived, just as the company were about to leave.

"This is a fine time to come," said Adelaide spitefully, and pretending to pout.

"We were uneasy about you, my dear fellow," said Bellequeue.

"We have disposed of the apricots without him," exclaimed M. Chopard, "but the reckless fellow said to himself, 'I shall always find a little peach.' Ha, ha, ha! that's rather good, that."

"And where did you come from, monsieur?" resumed Mademoiselle Adelaide.

"From the play, mademoiselle."

"From the play? What an idea to go to the play alone! Was it to go to the play that you made such a fine toilet as that?"

"No, I assure you."

"There, you see," said Bellequeue to Mademoiselle Adelaide, "the toilet was not for the play."

"Really, he looks magnificent, this evening," said Papa Chopard, admiring Jean, "he bears himself like a chevalier."

"And what did you see that was fine at the play, monsieur?"

"By Jove, mademoiselle, I should be very much troubled to say. I was so absent-minded, so much preoccupied with other things, that I came out without knowing what they were playing."

A smile of satisfaction reappeared on Mademoiselle Adelaide's face, while Bellequeue said in a low tone to the Chopards,—

"Well, now, what did I tell you? isn't he in love, eh? isn't he famously in love?"

"By George, yes, I was very much in love with Madame Chopard, it is true; but I confess the evening before our wedding that didn't prevent me from going to see 'Pied de Mouton,' and from learning the song of 'Gusman ne connait plus d'obstacles,' which I sang on the occasion of my wedding. You remember, wife, what intention I put into my voice while singing,—

You must expect some miracles,
For you, who would not do them?

That's almost a pun, isn't it?"

"Be still, M. Chopard, Adelaide is listening."

"Oh, well, what's the harm! isn't she going to be married? We shall have to sing another song then, ha, ha, ha!"

Jean did his best to be cheerful, he mingled in the conversation, said everything that came into his head, answered the questions which were addressed to him at cross purposes, and looked as if he did not quite know what he was doing; but the company thought him charming. Every time that he did something absent-minded they shouted with laughter, they looked at him, they whispered, and Mademoiselle Adelaide decided that M. Jean had never been so pleasing.

On leaving the Chopards, Bellequeue proposed to Jean that they should go into the tavern and smoke a cigar.

"I no longer smoke," answered Jean, quickly.

"You no longer smoke," cried Bellequeue, looking at his godson in astonishment. "Since when have you stopped smoking?"

"Since — today."

"What, you who are so fond of smoking?"

"I am no longer fond of it."

"Is it because the pipe has made you sick? Is it because —

"No, it's not that, but I notice that in general women don't like the odor of tobacco, and I no longer wish to smoke."

Bellequeue felt almost moved to tears at this mark of love; and after tenderly squeezing his godson's hand, he went home, saying,—

"By Jove, I could not have believed that he would fall in love so quickly. Love turns him inside out like a glove. He no longer smokes; could any one make a more delicate sacrifice? It was a deuced good thing I ordered my tight-fitting trousers."

Several days passed; Jean did his best to efface Madame Dorville from his memory, but her seductive image always returned to mingle with his thoughts; he no longer wished to go to Caroline's house. But every day he took further pains with his dress and personal appearance, and tried to get himself up like the young fops whom he met. He swaggered less in walking, and wished to have a more dignified carriage; it was no longer in

smoking-rooms nor in billiard-rooms that he passed his time, but he now went to walk in the neighborhood where one meets fops and fashionable women. When he saw from afar an elegant woman of the height and bearing of Madame Dorville he ran towards her, in the hope that it was she whom he would meet, but his hopes had always been frustrated. Often he would go to the Rue Richer, would pass and repass several times before Madame Dorville's dwelling and look up at her windows, and then he would depart sighing and sadly return to his own neighborhood.

The change which had taken place in Jean, his fastidious dress, which contrasted so strongly with his former carelessness, the difference which they noted in his tastes and manners, augmented every day the error into which the Chopards and Madame Durand had fallen. Mademoiselle Adelaide thought indeed that love had rendered her intended a little too melancholy, but she was so proud of the change which she believed she had wrought that at each sigh from the young man she darted a glance of triumph at her parents.

"The poor boy makes me feel sorry for him," Madame Chopard said to her husband, "what would become of him if he were not to marry our daughter? He would evaporate in sighs, like spirits of wine when it is not well corked."

"It is only necessary to have a little patience," Bellequeue had said one day to Jean, "ten days

more and you will be the happy possessor of the beautiful Adelaide. Don't bother yourself, I'll take charge of all the preparations, of all the details, you need trouble yourself about nothing but your costume, and everything will go very well."

Jean returned home, reflecting seriously on the marriage which they were making for him, and for which he now felt only repugnance, but how could he break off an affair which had gone so far. His mother, the Chopards, everybody, counted on his promise. "In ten days, that's a great deal too soon," said Jean to himself. "If at least I had time for reflection, time to forget her. Ah, perhaps if I were married I should think of her no longer, but I don't want to get married so soon; tomorrow I shall go and tell my godfather so." And the next morning Jean went to Bellequeue's, but the latter had already gone out, because the preparations for the wedding gave him a good deal of occupation.

Rose was alone. Jean had not seen her since the day of his visit to Madame Dorville, and he knew well that in seeing her he should be obliged to converse of that which he wished to forget. The little maid was delighted to see him again, for she still understood by what her master said that the marriage was about to take place, and she could not make it conform with what she knew.

"Well, M. Jean, what is the news? Tell me all about it, I beg of you," said the little maid,

following Jean into the drawing-room. "They still say you are going to marry Mademoiselle Chopard, but I can't believe it, for I know very well that you are not in love with her, your taste is too good for that. However, M. Bellequeue is making all his preparations for the wedding-day. He is having a pair of tight-fitting trousers made, which at his age is a little risky, but he says it is the fashion, and, in fact, he is very well made."

Jean did not answer, he had seated himself, and seemed to be reflecting.

"Well, now, monsieur, aren't you going to say anything to me? I am in your confidence, you know; and you like me, in a friendly way, of course."

"What do you want me to say to you, Mademoiselle Rose?"

"Is it true that you are going to be married in ten days to Mademoiselle Chopard?"

"They want me to, but I hardly care about it."

"Well, indeed, then why should you marry? Is it necessary at your age, with your face and fortune that you should marry someone who doesn't please you?"

"But Rose, they say that we are betrothed because one evening I took hold of Mademoiselle Adelaide's hand."

"Oh, what a story! Well now, the idea that you must be betrothed to a young girl because you took hold of her hand. Lots of people have

shaken hands with me, and I've never been betrothed because of that. It's M. Bellequeue and the parents who said that to you to inveigle you better."

"You think, then, that I am still free, Rose?"

"Certainly, and you must be more than obliging if you sacrifice yourself to please other people. Marriage is for life, and therefore one has to be pretty careful what one does about it. And this lady who is so pretty, haven't you seen her again?"

Jean sighed, and answered,—

"Yes, indeed, I have seen her — once; on the day that I left you so quickly."

"And you haven't been there since."

"No."

"You seemed to find her so charming."

"Oh, I haven't changed my feelings in regard to that."

"Why don't you go there now, then? Did she receive you unkindly?"

"No, not exactly. I thought I should have seen her again, but — if you knew how awkward, how embarrassed I was in her presence; I didn't know what to do with myself."

"Bah, one is always awkward the first time, then one grows accustomed to it."

"No, Rose, no. I thought as you do that I should regain my assurance, I did not imagine that anything could intimidate me. However, I perceive that in the great world, in what they

call good society, I look like an idiot, and I say nothing but foolish things."

"Come, now, that is impossible! you are too modest."

"There were some ladies there who looked at me and then made signs to each other, smiling mockingly, and a young man, who did not take his eyes off the bow which I wore at my neck. Was it necessary that he should trouble himself about that? In society, Rose, I see very well that they trouble themselves very much about trifles which I had better have learned the value of too."

"Aren't you well enough as you are?"

"I begin to see that I might be much better. I smelled of tobacco, and I have seen that that is displeasing."

"These society people are sometimes very ridiculous themselves."

"At last, I came away and she didn't invite me to return."

"One can't say that over again every time. When one has said it once, it always stands good."

"Oh, no, her manner was very cold as she showed me out. It is true that after I had stepped on her cat I got out very quickly."

"Oh, mercy, if you step on cats, why —"

"It's all ended, Rose, I shall not see her again."

"Don't see her again, if you like; but that's not any reason for your marrying Mademoiselle Chopard, whom you don't like."

"That marriage will distract me, perhaps."

"The idea of marrying to distract yourself, that's a pretty idea! And if it doesn't distract you? You won't be any less the husband of one woman, because you love another."

"I in love with another? Why, Rose, I've never told you that."

"Do you think I have any need of being told? I can see very well what's the matter with you. You are in love with that beautiful Madame Dorville. Yes, madly in love, and it is that which makes you so changed for some time past."

"Me! In love? Oh, you are mistaken, Rose. You know well that I have never been in love."

"All the more reason that it takes so much effect upon you the first time."

"I think that lady very pretty, because she really is so; but I have never had the idea —"

"I tell you, you are in love, very much in love. I don't say that you will be long in love, because with men that ordinarily passes very quickly; but surely your feeling for her is different from that which you have for Mademoiselle Adelaide."

"Why, Rose, what a comparison! Mademoiselle Chopard makes me tired! She makes me more impatient every day."

"And you are going to marry her. Why, that wouldn't be common sense."

"You are right, Rose," said Jean, decidedly. "I will not marry her."

"Keep to that resolution and you will do well."

"Tomorrow I shall come back to see my godfather, and I shall inform him of my resolution. But I assure you, Rose, that I am not in love with that lady, to whose house I decidedly shall not go again."

Saying these words Jean departed, and the little maid jumped about the room, exclaiming,—

"He will not marry Mademoiselle Chopard, and monsieur will have no use for his tight-fitting trousers!"

But events do not always follow the course which we have foreseen. On going home Jean learned that his mother was in bed, and that she felt very much indisposed. That evening fever declared itself; Jean remained by his mother, and thought no further of his marriage. In a few days the malady had made rapid progress and, despite all the care they lavished on her, Madame Durand died nine days after being taken ill.

Jean experienced the deepest grief at the loss of his mother; Bellequeue shared his sorrow, and for a long time mourning and sadness replaced the projects of Hymen and of happiness.

CHAPTER V

Change of Conduct

During the six weeks which followed the death of his mother, Jean hardly went out of the house. The severing of this natural tie had left him very sad; his mother had been so unvaryingly kind and indulgent to him, so thoughtful for his comfort, so concerned in his happiness, that he was profoundly affected by the loss he had sustained and refused all distractions; solitude alone seemed to please him.

To Bellequeue this sorrow seemed very natural and he would have been sorry to see it less, but as time went on he wished to try and draw Jean from the melancholy which seemed growing upon him and thought that the best means for that would be to speak to him of his future and of his intended marriage.

"You haven't been to see the Chopards yet since you have been in mourning," said he. "They respect your sorrow, and cannot but be touched by the regret which you feel at the loss of your mother. But, my dear Jean, you cannot sorrow forever and there is surely no harm in going to see one's friends and the woman you love. I know very

well you will not talk to her of love now, Adelaide is too reasonable to expect that, but she will console you, the sight of her will afford you pleasure; for her part, she is very anxious to see you."

"There is no hurry," answered Jean coldly.

Bellequeue did not know how to explain this answer on the part of a man who had appeared so much in love, moreover, the Chopards were astonished at not seeing the young man. Mademoiselle Adelaide expected him every day. They questioned Bellequeue, and the latter answered,—

"My godson always pushes things to an extreme. I see very well that he is afraid the sight of his intended will make him forget his mother too quickly, and that is why he will not come yet."

"That speaks well for his filial feeling," said Madame Chopard.

"And it proves the ardor of his affection for our daughter," added M. Chopard.

"For all that, it's rather dull," said Mademoiselle Adelaide, "to see nothing of my future husband for so long. Good heavens! he need not talk to me of love. I know well that at present we could not be married; but I want to see him, M. Bellequeue, I want him."

"I will bring him soon, my dear child; you know that to please you he has made every sacrifice; he no longer smokes."

"He no longer smokes, why, that is charming. I didn't forbid him to."

"All the same, he told me he saw it was displeasing to the ladies."

"Oh, my daughter, you will have a husband possessed of the most delicate consideration,"

"Don't make him smoke in spite of himself when he is married. Oh, oh, a pun."

"Why, father!"

"In fact," resumed Bellequeue, "he no longer spends his time at the tavern, he no longer plays at billiards, he no longer frequents the gaming-houses with all those jolly fellows who won money from him."

"That's very good hearing."

"Oh, he is settling down already. As to his dress, his deportment, there is a prodigious change in him there, and it is you, beautiful Adelaide, who have worked this metamorphosis."

"Like Diana who changed her husband into a dear. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, papa, you are terrible with your play on words."

"Come, I love puns, I am all for puns, I have a little wit and I use it. Give me a prize, wife."

Bellequeue departed, promising to soon bring his godson, and Jean, to put an end to his godfather's solicitations, consented one evening to accompany him to the Chopards. They received Jean with the empressement, with the sorrow which belonged to the occasion. Mademoiselle Adelaide had made a toilet in which black predominated,

in order to prove to her intended that she shared his grief. Madame Chopard did not speak of fruits in brandy or of liqueurs made by her daughter, and M. Chopard had promised not to make any puns. They maintained during the entire evening a very strict demeanor. Bellequeue even thought that it was unconventional to speak above a whisper, or to make any noise in walking about the drawing-room, all of which gave to the meeting the appearance of an evening of Robertson's dissolving-views. At the end of an hour, Jean had had enough of it, he rose, bowed very coldly to Mademoiselle Adelaide, who heaved an immense sigh as she said good-by to him, and held out her hand to him, which he did not dream of kissing, and which she was forced to drop again, saying to herself, "He must, indeed, be very much affected."

"Good-by, my dear fellow," said M. Chopard, taking the young man's arm, "today we have taken nothing because of the circumstances, as is quite natural; but Adelaide has made a certain walnut brandy to which later on we will say a few words."

Jean bowed to every one and departed. When he had gone, Bellequeue said to the Chopards,—

"That went off very well."

"The poor fellow is full of grief," said Madame Chopard, "I am sure he has not spoken a word of love, has he, my daughter."

"No, mamma, not a single word."

"His grief is very deep," said M. Chopard, "but one cannot but praise it because it is a duty, and one's natural feelings must have their vent."

Some days after this evening, without informing Bellequeue and without consulting anybody, Jean left the apartment where he had been living in the Rue Saint-Paul to take a very pretty one in the Rue de Provence. He replaced a part of his furniture with some that was modern and elegant, had his new apartment decorated with much care, and took a valet in place of Catherine, who wished to establish herself in business and to whom Jean gave the means of setting up a little shop. Although Jean did not smoke, and although he now dressed like young men of good style, his bearing and his manner outlived his old costume. One cannot lose in a few weeks habits which have been contracted in infancy. Jean still often swore and made use of expressions not permissible in good society. But he was young, he had a fortune, he appeared confiding in general, which was more than necessary for him in order to be admitted into society, where, often under the brilliant varnish of politeness and knowledge of the world, one meets many people who are not worth as much as a rustic in wooden shoes. Jean, who up to this time had fled from society and mocked at its usages, at the restraint which it imposed—Jean wished to go into society. He could

not explain to himself the motives which had changed his conduct. He was not amused at the play, in public gardens, on the promenades, or at concerts, but he wished to go there in order that he might become accustomed to the kind of life which was new to him, and in the hope of meeting a person whom he adored in secret, and of whom he thought incessantly without wishing to confess yet that he was in love.

However, the Chopard family still expected that Jean would again come to visit them. Mademoiselle Adelaide was consumed with love and longing. The distillation was neglected, the sciences and the arts were abandoned. The young person was in an insupportably bad temper every day. More than a month had passed since the sad visit Jean had paid her, and no one had heard anything further of her fiancé. Such conduct as this seemed extraordinary.

"He is very right to weep for the loss of his parent," said Mademoiselle Adelaide, "but there is a medium in everything. If my intended's tears are still flowing, and he is still breathing sighs from the time of his last visit, he must now be as dry as a cuckoo, and I don't want to let him pine away to nothing before marrying him."

"Our daughter is right," said M. Chopard, "Jean is too ardent; as Adelaide well says, there is a medium in everything, and this young man has exceeded it."

"Father, I want him to come, I want to know what he is doing, and I can't live like this."

"Calm yourself," said Madame Chopard, "you know that this poor Jean has become all love."

"I don't know if he is all love, but it seems to me very disobliging not to come and see us; and M. Bellequeue, one hears nothing of him now either. It must be that he is sick. Papa, go there and see, I beg of you."

M. Chopard yielded to his daughter's desires and went to M. Bellequeue's house. For five weeks Jean's godfather had been kept at home by a slight attack of the gout. He passed his time in playing draughts with his little maid, and not seeing Jean was persuaded that he hardly ever left the Chopards. Mademoiselle Rose came and opened the door to M. Chopard, and was careful to follow him and to keep coming and going in order that she might learn what he had come to say to her master.

"Well, well, my dear fellow, have you fixed on a day for the marriage?" said Bellequeue, as he saw Chopard come in. "It is more than three months since Madame Durand died, and I can understand that young people who are very much in love —"

"No, my dear fellow, it is not that; I wanted first of all to know why we didn't see you."

"Why, you see, I have had a little attack of the gout, but it is nothing now, I am so much

better that I hope to be quite lively on my feet for my godson's wedding. He neglects me, does dear Jean, but I forgive him because I imagine very well that he doesn't often leave your house, isn't it so?"

"Well, not quite like that yet, my friend, I wanted on the contrary to ask you what had become of him. We haven't seen him since the evening when you brought him to us."

"Why, good heavens, what does that mean?"

"I confess to you that I am afraid he has taken that English malady, you know what I mean — the spleen — and my daughter fears it also."

"The devil, why you make me very uneasy. Certainly, if he is still weeping, he must have got it, and my cursed gout won't allow me to go out yet. But you must go to see him, M. Chopard, you must really go and try to console this dear fellow."

"In fact, as his future father-in-law, it seems to me that I can well go and inquire after his health. There is nothing unconventional in doing that."

"On the contrary, it is very natural. Go, and come back and tell me in what state you find him."

M. Chopard departed, leaving M. Bellequeue very uneasy about his godson, and Mademoiselle Rose laughing in her sleeve at the news she had heard. The former distiller went to the Rue Saint-Paul to see Jean's dwelling. He asked for M. Durand, and they told him that M. Durand

had moved a month before and that he lived now in the Rue de Provence, Chaussée-d'Antin.

M. Chopard was for a moment surprised by this news, but he said to himself, "I see what it is, our lover has taken a lodging suitable for when he is married; he wishes his wife to live in a good neighborhood, Chaussée-d'Antin. It is a surprise which he is preparing, I can see just how it is. I will go there," and M. Chopard walked toward the Rue de Provence. He found Jean's dwelling, he admired the house, the staircase, and said to himself, "Adelaide will be delighted, a gilded banister, it's magnificent; statues in the niches on each landing, one might say there is nothing but niches."

Arrived on the third floor, M. Chopard rang, and Jean's servant came to the door.

"Is young Durand at home?" said M. Chopard.

"No, monsieur, my master is not in."

"An, he is not in? The devil, he has gone out then?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"He goes out sometimes?"

"Every day. Monsieur is hardly ever at home."

"It's all the same, still I'll come in, I should like to see his apartment."

The servant allowed this gentleman, whose expression of good-fellowship indicated that he had no evil intentions, to go in, but he followed him into every room, of which M. Chopard seemed as if he were making an inspection.

"Hang it, what elegance; it is very prettily ornamented all through. When I tell them where he lives, it will be quite a surprise. Did he tell you that he was arranging a surprise?"

"Monsieur, tells me nothing."

"For a lover he is discreet. Let's see, this is the dining-room. That wouldn't seat fifteen people at the table, but it will be big enough when there is no one here but the family. This is the drawing-room, which he has made into a bedroom as far as I can see."

"Monsieur has not a drawing-room, he receives nobody."

"Yes, now, but he will receive. What is that room there, a little dressing-room? And what more?"

"That's all monsieur, with the room that I have upstairs."

"That's all, why it's very small. And the kitchen?"

"There isn't one, monsieur."

"No kitchen? Is he a fool? It's the most essential room in the household."

"Why, monsieur is a bachelor."

"I know very well that he is a bachelor, but he will not be so for long. Take an apartment without a kitchen! What the devil was he thinking of! Tell me, my good fellow, your master is always very sad, isn't he? He takes no pleasure, no distraction."

"Excuse me, my master on the contrary goes out every day. He goes to the play, and is seen on the promenades. He rides on horseback, and makes at least two toilets a day; he has not a moment to himself."

M. Chopard opened his eyes wide, saying, —

"This is a singular manner of conducting himself, I don't understand it at all, but Adelaide, who is so clever, will find the clue to this conduct. I must go and tell her all that I have learned."

M. Chopard returned home and informed his wife and daughter of Jean's conduct. Madame Chopard uttered some exclamations of surprise, but she waited until her daughter should speak to know what she ought to think. It was some moments before Mademoiselle Adelaide answered, she was violently agitated about something. At length she murmured in a faint voice, —

"Mother, mother, unlace me, I beg of you, I am suffocating."

"O my God! My daughter, what is suffocating you?"

"Has she had a third breakfast?" exclaimed M. Chopard.

"It is M. Jean's conduct which suffocates me, which makes me indignant."

"That's true, she's quite right," said Madame Chopard, "M. Jean's conduct is shocking."

"It is very unkind," said M. Chopard, stamping his feet, and walking about the room angrily.

"I know very well," said Adelaide, "that his trouble, his grief at the death of his mother might make him forget many things for the time being, and that his feelings are very excusable."

"Oh, certainly," said Madame Chopard, "under such circumstances, the poor young man, I can understand that he has a good deal to complain of. I think that his heart is good."

"True," said M. Chopard, drawing his handkerchief with a softened air, "I have never doubted his heart."

"But not to come near us for more than a month, not to give me any news of him, me, his fiancé, almost his wife, and that when he is going into society, frequenting the theatres, to spend his money with I know not whom. Oh, it is too much! That is flying in the face of all propriety, an infraction of all the rules of politeness."

"It is too much," said Madame Chopard, "it is really impolite and unpardonable."

"He is conducting himself like a bootblack,' cried M. Chopard, making a menacing gesture.

"However, he loves me, you have seen how love has changed him; he no longer smokes and he has become elegantly refined in his dress."

"And his melancholy, my daughter; his sweet melancholy, which indicates so well his budding passion."

"That is to say," cried M. Chopard, "he will become an idiot from his intense love for you."

"Papa, things cannot go on like this. It is only because I felt embarrassed with Jean, and that I laughed well at his love. O heavens, how I laughed at it!"

"You did very well, my dear," said Madame Chopard, "you, who have everything to render you pleasing, will never lack for a husband, and certainly you will be able to find one who has quite as much as M. Jean Durand."

"He is worth a good deal more," said Papa Chopard, "but after all I don't see that the young man had anything fine about him, and his face—"

"Pardon me, papa, his face is very good, and his figure is superbly proportioned."

"Yes, he is very well made," said Madame Chopard, "one cannot fail to see it."

"He has a magnificent walk," said M. Chopard.

"But for all that, papa, it is necessary that he should explain himself, that he should come here. I cannot remain like this; I am in a false position."

"Our daughter is right, M. Chopard, her position is untenable."

"Hang it, I should think so; she doesn't know where she stands, the dear child, and then I believe it is necessary—"

"What shall we do about it?"

"Oh, first of all, we must go to see M. Bellequeue, acquaint him with his godson's conduct, and beg him to go and see M. Jean in order to get him to explain his ulterior intentions."

"You are right, we must make him explain his ulterior intentions, must we not? But, by the way, Bellequeue has the gout, and he can't walk well yet."

"Well, what of that, father, he must take a carriage, that is all."

"That's right, he must take a carriage; she has an answer for everything, this dear girl. Come, daughter, if you don't marry M. Jean, you will find plenty of young men who will be only too happy —"

"Yes, papa, but it is M. Jean whom I want to marry."

"Then you shall marry him, my daughter," said Madame Chopard.

And M. Chopard repeated, as he returned to Bellequeue's, "That's very simple, since she wants to marry him, it is clear that he must marry her."

CHAPTER VI

Jean at a Grand Party

We may easily imagine that it was not undesignedly that Jean had taken an apartment in the Rue de Provence; in this new locality he was quite near Madame Dorville's and he hoped that thus living in her neighborhood he should sometimes be so exceedingly fortunate as to meet her. Not a single day passed without his walking down the Rue Richer, and twenty times had he been tempted to venture to call upon her. But then a something, an indefinable feeling for which he could not account, would hold him back; he knew not how she would receive him, and he did not wish to expose himself to a cold welcome; a secret pride warned him that even love should not brook disdain; he had no need of education to feel that.

But the summer was not yet over and the weather was still balmy and beautiful. Jean did not meet Caroline either out walking or at the theatres and he therefore inferred that she was in the country, and he waited impatiently for winter to bring her back to Paris.

Jean had become intimate with a young man named Gersac, who lived in the same house as

himself. This Gersac passed his life in pleasure-seeking, and thus early in their acquaintance he had several times offered to take Jean to a party; for, his thousand crowns of income being insufficient to give free scope to his thirst for recreation, Gersac was not at all averse to dipping into the purses of his friends, and that of Jean was never closed to him. But this Gersac had at least the merit of being frank and impulsive in his actions. When he borrowed he always took care to say that he did not know when he could pay it back; he was ever ready to acknowledge that he managed his affairs badly, and that he hopelessly exceeded his income. To confess one's faults is to have them forgiven.

Gersac was heedless, dissipated, but he was well-bred, clever and witty, and by his cheerfulness he won pardon for his trespasses. He had immediately gauged Jean, whose frankness and originality had pleased him.

"My dear fellow," said he, "you have up to the present lived in quite another world to the one with which you wish to make acquaintance; but you have physique, worth, money; and with those things it is possible to become all you wish. You would like now to be a fashionable young man, to be able to present yourself anywhere, to know how to conduct yourself and how to enter a drawing-room. Rely on me, I will answer for it that I shall be able to form you."

Jean smiled at Gersac's assurance, but he followed his friend's advice, and the latter, who had already taken Jean to a few small parties, one morning came to him and said,—

"My dear fellow, I'll take you this evening to a big party; there'll be music, punch, dancing; in fact, there'll be everything, but it will all be very good. It's at a rich old bachelor's. He doesn't know what to do with his money and would bore himself to death if we did not have the kindness to get him to give five or six parties a year, and thus assemble about him all the best people in Paris. As his hotel stands in the midst of fine grounds, we always arrange for a fête in summer, because people can then enjoy themselves in the gardens, which are magnificent. You will come, will you not?"

"With pleasure, although I still feel very awkward, very much at a loss in society."

"No, you are beginning to do very well. You are very much at home there already. You lost your money like a nobleman at that house where I took you last, but why do you never breathe a word, never mingle in the conversation?"

"I should say something stupid."

"Pshaw, you are too timid; besides, do you suppose people never say anything foolish in good society?"

"But they say it with assurance, with pretension, and then it passes for wit. I don't believe I shall

ever make what I say pass for that. One should play an instrument, I know nothing about that."

"That makes no difference, you must always judge of others' talents as if you possessed them all; one must have opinions; to say, 'It is charming, it's divine,' at the risk of being mistaken, is far better than saying nothing."

"It's always that d——d fear of saying something wrong which prevents me."

"Yes, by the way, you mustn't swear, you must guard against that. Except the 'devil carry me away!' you may say that cheerfully, with gusto. And you mustn't moisten your fingers when you are playing cards, for that is the worst possible form. Happily you had lost five hundred francs the last time you did that, or they wouldn't have forgiven you. But this evening you will see what they call a brilliant gathering, charming women, artists, bankers, a great number of people."

"Oh, good heavens, you make me tremble!"

"Not at all, my friend, one may be more at ease in the midst of three hundred persons than with a dozen."

Jean promised to follow Gersac's instructions, and after making an elegant toilet he went with his friend to the brilliant party, which was given in a fine hotel on the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. The gathering was numerous. Jean was not at his ease, but in a crowd that would be less noticeable. Gersac made the presentation with due formality;

he led Jean up to a septuagenarian gentleman, who pronounced a few civil words, to which our hero answered by a low bow. When the old man had passed to another person, Gersac whispered to his friend,—

"That's done with, my dear fellow; you can now take part in the pleasures of the evening without troubling yourself about the one who is giving the party. Now, I shall leave you, because I can't always be beside you, that would be ridiculous. Now you can go about as you please, play, walk around, amuse yourself; but don't hold yourself as straight as a picket. We shall meet again later on."

Gersac departed, and Jean was left to himself in these magnificent drawing-rooms in the midst of two or three hundred persons who came and went and crossed over, looking about them; some of them smiling, some of them talking in low tones to those beside them. The brilliancy, the lustre, the toilets, the continual exchange of words which was taking place around him, the distant sound of music, the curious looks of some young people, the most mischievous being those of some pretty women, all this stunned Jean, who did not realize where he was nor what he had to do with all these people, in the midst of whom he had nobody to speak a word to, Gersac being already lost in the crowd.

However, Jean tried to hide his embarrassment

beneath an air of assurance, and hat in hand, because Gersac had told him that in these large gatherings one must never be separated from his hat, he walked about in the drawing-rooms, which were decorated with the greatest elegance, and where cards, conversation, music offered various pleasures to the crowd which was gathered there.

The apartment was on the groundfloor, and several rooms gave on to the gardens, in which a part of the company was walking. Jean had already made several tours of the drawing-rooms. Every time he met the master of the house he bowed low to him, and the latter looked at him in astonishment and passed by without stopping. Jean held himself respectfully, or stood aside bowing slightly when a lady passed near him, and he was astonished that no one returned his salute, and that no one appeared to notice his politeness. Tired of walking around the drawing-rooms, he went into the gardens, where different games were taking place; swings and merry-go-rounds were presently occupied by the company. Jean looked on at all this from afar, he dared not venture to take part in any of these divertissements, and with his hat under his arm tried to stifle the yawnings which overtook him in the midst of the crowd. From time to time Gersac passed near him and murmured a few words.

"You are amusing yourself?"

"Not much."

"Why don't you do something, play, take part in some games?"

"I don't know anybody."

"That is all the same, you can talk, make acquaintance; come, my dear fellow, have a little animation."

Gersac went off again, and Jean continued to walk about, saying nothing and doing nothing; but suddenly his weariness, his embarrassment, disappeared. Another sentiment took possession of him, all his blood rushed toward his heart, and he stood motionless and trembling; he no longer noticed what was passing around him, he only saw a woman who was crossing one of the brilliant drawing-rooms. It was Caroline whom he had seen. "She is here, how happy I am!"—that was Jean's first thought. However, he still remained at the same place, and seemed as though he were afraid he had been mistaken, until Caroline had disappeared in the midst of the company. Then he ran towards the drawing-room in which he had seen her, he darted along without paying any attention to the crowd now; he pushed, he elbowed, determined to make his way to the desired spot, he stepped on a lady's foot, he brushed the coat of a dandy, he almost overturned an old marquis, but he never dreamed of excusing himself, and paid no attention to the people who were looking at him and saying,—

"Why, good heavens! where is that gentleman

going? What a singular manner of walking through a drawing-room, he seems as if he wanted to upset everybody. What is the matter with the man? He looks as if he thought he was in a rush at the theatre!"

Jean went on unheeding, one person alone occupied his thought. At length he perceived her in a room where they were about to have some music. Caroline was seated beside a young lady, and several gentlemen went up and bowed, and chatted with her. Should Jean advance towards her? should he go and bow to Madame Dorville? he asked himself, but he did not dare to, he wished that she would see him; but people passed and repassed before him, and the circle which surrounded Caroline hid Jean from her sight; he went and seated himself sadly in a corner, from whence he could at least look at her, envying all those who approached her, and grudging the smiles which she addressed to others, the grace which she displayed, and the charm which diffused from her whole person.

The concert had begun, several persons performed on the harp or the piano. Jean did not listen to them, he did not take his eyes from Caroline, and he was wishing that all his senses could be absorbed in his sense of sight, when a young man approached Madame Dorville and taking her hand led her to a piano where another person was seated. Jean followed all her move-

ments, he looked angrily at the young man who chatted and laughed with Caroline, and his anger increased when he heard him sing and address to the pretty woman the most tender confessions, and heard the latter answer the young man in a charming voice that she shared his love.

Jean felt a cold perspiration roll down his face, he clenched his fists, bit his lips and several times was about to dash toward the piano and seek a quarrel with the one who dared to speak of his flame for Madame Dorville.

"How well they sang that," said a lady seated near Jean, "so much taste, so much expression, was there not, monsieur?"

This question was addressed to Jean, but he answered nothing, he heard nothing but the singers.

"It's a duet from 'Aubergistes de qualité,' is it not, monsieur?" said the lady again to Jean, and obtaining no answer, she felt sure that the young man was deaf and dumb.

The duet ended, Madame Dorville returned to her place; they surrounded her, they complimented her, Jean began to understand that what he had heard had no relation to anything but the music. He felt what happiness he could have tasted had he been able to sing thus with Caroline, and he regretted that he was not a musician.

Jean could no longer contain himself, he felt that he must speak; he arose, advanced suddenly

towards the chair occupied by Madame Dorville and paused before her. Caroline raised her eyes to this person who was standing motionless before her chair, and recognized Jean. Surprise was depicted on all her features as she said to him, in a very amiable tone,—

"What, is it you, M. Durand?"

"Yes, it is I," answered Jean in a stifled voice, "you did not expect to meet me here?"

"No, I confess that I did not, for I think you told me that you did not like society — parties."

"That is true, I did not, but I have changed very much since — for some time past."

"So I see," answered Caroline, glancing furtively at Jean's toilet.

"Madame, you sang divinely," cried a young man approaching Madame Dorville, before whom Jean was planted. "Upon my honor, it was enchanting, it was ravishing, it was the acme, the perfection of harmony."

"Oh, you are too indulgent, monsieur," said Caroline, smiling.

"No, I do but echo the opinion of everybody in the room. I am sure that gentleman will tell you as much."

Jean looked at the dandy, and murmured,—

"No, monsieur, I should not speak like that to madame."

"You don't like music, I believe," said Caroline to Jean.

"Yes, madame, I like it very much now."

"He must be a savage, a Welshman, not to like to hear you," said the dandy, turning on his heel, then he went to dispense his compliments further.

Jean was delighted that this gentleman had taken himself off, and although he remained before Caroline without saying a word to her, he did not wish that any one else should enter into conversation with her. Caroline looked at Jean and seemed to be waiting for him to say something, but the latter contented himself with looking at her and sighing, and under the stress of his feeling twirling his hat which he held in his hand.

"It seems to me that I see crape on your hat," said Caroline suddenly. "Have you lost some of your relations?"

"Yes, madame, I lost my mother nearly four months ago."

"Your mother; oh, I am sorry for you. I can understand that you are seeking in society some distraction from your sorrow."

"No, I am not seeking distraction, but I —"

"Why, it's Madame Dorville! So you are in Paris now?"

This question was addressed to Caroline by a gentleman wearing a decoration, who placed himself between her and Jean. The latter looked angrily at the person who prevented him from talking with Caroline, but he did not leave his place.

"I came yesterday from the country to pass a single week in Paris; and several ladies of my acquaintance almost had to force me to come to this party, for I was very much fatigued."

"Those ladies have rendered the occasion complete by bringing you here. Really, we see too little of you. When one has so many talents as have you, it is robbing society not to embellish it more often with your presence."

Caroline smiled at this compliment, the gentleman kissed her hand gallantly and departed. Jean made a horrible grimace, and did not budge.

"Have you been here before?" said Caroline to Jean, after a moment.

"No, madame, this is the first time, and I was beginning to feel — stu— to feel bored when I perceived you."

"I can understand that feeling when one knows nobody in a drawing-room. You don't play?"

"Oh, I find very little pleasure in playing cards. However, I played some days ago."

"Well, you must at least enjoy the sight of so many toilets, so many pretty women, for there are a great many here."

"A great many, why, I have seen only one; but that one —

"Madame Dorville, you will sing something else, will you not?" said a little gentleman who held a lorgnette in his hand and bowed low to Caroline; while Jean muttered,—

"Plague take all these cursed chatterers."

Caroline excused herself from singing again, and the little gentleman went farther to seek for a performer. Madame Dorville then turned her attention to Jean, who was pouting and muttering,—

"It seems that it is impossible to say two words together here."

"In society," answered Caroline, "we exchange many words, but say very few things."

Several ladies approached Madame Dorville at this moment, and now Jean was obliged to yield his place, but he went to get a chair and came back and seated himself behind Caroline, as though he had decided to serve her as a sentinel. A numerous circle was again formed around the amiable woman, who knew how to answer each one graciously and wittily, and whom everybody loved to hear almost as much as they loved to see her. Several persons drew their chairs nearer to that occupied by Madame Dorville. They were soon engaged in conversation. They talked of the fine arts, the muse, literature, the theatre. Some distinguished men came and placed themselves beside Caroline, because people of intellect are attracted by those of their own kind. The conversation was lively, witty, and playful. Caroline was pleasing without appearing to be aware of it, and if some gleams of malice appeared now and then, at least she did not seek to shine by tearing her dearest friends to pieces. Jean took no part

in the conversation; seated a few feet behind Caroline, he listened to what they said, and did not open his mouth. Several people looked at him in astonishment.

"He is taking notes," they said to themselves, for many people take silence for observation. Caroline glanced at Jean from time to time in a manner which indicated that she was distressed at his situation, for she alone was not mistaken as to his silence.

But the orchestra struck up for the dance. It was directed by Tolbecque, and his delicious quadrilles attracted the dancers in crowds. Caroline was for a moment alone, she turned then toward Jean, and said to him in a touching voice,—

"Did you not want to talk with us?"

"Me, talk with so many people?" cried Jean, who could no longer control himself, "am I not an animal — a d——d unfortunate ignoramus? How could I mingle in your conversation without making gross blunders? Can I talk of things I don't know anything about, to get myself laughed at by all your society people — oh, how mortified I am that I'm so stupid! Since I have known you, madame, I perceive all that I lack. Formerly, I thought myself well enough, fancied myself, even; I believed that money was sufficient, that a man who was not humpbacked or bandy-legged, and who had some heart in his breast, always knew enough; but today —"

"What, fair lady, are you not going to join the dance?" said a young exquisite, presenting his hand to Madame Dorville. "Why, what are you dreaming of? they are asking for you, they are calling for you. You really must come."

Caroline yielded to the insistence of the young man, she arose, gave him her hand and departed, again glancing as she did so at Jean. The latter watched Caroline as she went off, stamping his foot with impatience; he remained alone in the drawing-room, where there were only some isolated couples who paid no attention to him.

"What torture," said Jean to himself, "not to be able to speak for a moment to her without being interrupted. She would much rather dance than listen to me. Come, let's be a man and occupy myself with some one beside her."

At this moment Gersac crossed the drawing-room, where Jean was alone, seated upon a chair in deep reflection.

"What the devil are you doing there?" said he approaching Jean.

"Why, I was reflecting."

"People don't come here to reflect, they come here to be giddy; why don't you take part in the pleasure of the evening. You must dance."

"I don't dance."

"You must play, you must do something, and not stay there like a bear. The punch and the ices are circulating in profusion, have you taken any?"

"No, I don't wish for anything."

"And I want you to have some punch. I want to make your doleful face more cheerful. What the devil is the matter with you this evening, my dear fellow? You must learn that in good company the first essential is to look cheerful; it is the worst possible form to sulk in society — people keep that for their own firesides."

Gersac passed his arm under Jean's and led him with him, made him drink several glasses of punch, pointed out the pretty women, told him some of the anecdotes of the day, and finally placed him at a card table, saying to him,—

"You have good partners, you are a fine player, do your best, and fortune will smile on you."

Jean began to play for the sake of doing something, but he paid no attention to what he was doing. He could think of nothing but Caroline; he played wrong, and did not listen to the people who had betted on him, and who said to him,—

"Monsieur, take care what you're doing, you'll compromise the game, and that's not the thing."

Jean lost, he betted, he lost again, he was obstinate and lost at écarté all that he had on him, he then left the table ill-humoredly. Gersac came toward him.

"Well, how now, old fellow."

"I've lost twenty louis."

"That's a trifle, you'll win them back some other time."

"I am not anxious to win them back, your écarté bores me. I not only lose my money, but I have to listen to the reproaches of those who betted on me."

"That's the custom."

"If I hadn't restrained myself, I would have sent all your betters walking."

"You would have looked like a rustic, a man without education. Come and drink some punch, it is delicious. I've won five hundred francs."

"Oh, I am not astonished that you think the punch so good."

Jean took another glass of punch, and the noise, the heat, the sight of the people moving about the room, began to heat his blood, he felt less embarrassed in walking among the crowd, and Gersac said to him from time to time,—

"That's right, my dear fellow, you have gained a little assurance, you do better now. I knew well that I should make something of you. Come, play the gallant. Launch yourself."

Jean went towards the room where they were dancing, and soon perceived Caroline. A great number of young men surrounded her, admiring her graceful dancing, it was who should have the honor of being her cavalier. Jean followed Caroline with his eyes, he admired her also, but he suffered at not being able like the others to offer her his hand; he watched the quadrille, he was jealous of all who approached Caroline, he looked

at them angrily, and was ready to provoke them. But from time to time Caroline looked at him, and it seemed to him that there was in her glance something tender, consoling, which prevented him from yielding to the impetuous impulses which agitated him; those sweet looks calmed him, and he had the strength to restrain himself.

Several contra-dances succeeded; Caroline had not been free for a moment. When she was not dancing, a swarm of young people made a circle around her, Jean dared not approach her again, he held himself aloof, but he did not lose sight of her. His face contrasted with those of the dancers which were animated by pleasure. Gersac passed near Jean and whispered to him,—

"Why don't you do something. Don't look like Don Quixote at the wedding. Why don't you dance?"

"I don't know how to dance."

"What does that matter. They don't use steps, no, they merely walk through the dances; you'll do well enough."

Gersac went off, Jean hesitated. For some time an English had been forming and they were calling for gentlemen. Jean perceived Caroline, whom a young man had just taken by the hand. He raised his head, and went to look for a partner, saying, "Come, hang it all, I am not going to stand there like an idiot. I shall know what to do as well as the others."

The pretty dancers had been engaged, and there remained only a lady of fifty years of age, who was overloaded with flowers and ribbons, and who since the beginning of the ball had waited in vain for some one to come and invite her. Jean offered his hand to this lady, for it mattered little to him with whom he danced, provided he might sometimes find himself opposite Caroline. The lady gave her hand to Jean, and at the same time gave him a most amiable glance, to which he paid not the slightest attention.

"I have almost forgotten the English," said the lady, placing herself opposite Jean.

"And I, madame, have never known it."

"Oh, it is very easy, it is only a question of doing as the others do."

"That will be all right then."

However, it was not all right, because Jean, whose eyes were always seeking Caroline, did not understand what they told him to do. He broke the figures, stepped on his neighbor's feet, took the lady of another for his own, and when it was his turn to galop with his partner he dashed her along with so much precipitation and entangled his feet so greatly with hers that they both fell in the middle of the room. People uttered exclamations of fear, and Jean's partner, who knew that at fifty years of age one cannot fall gracefully, decided to find herself sufficiently hurt to be interesting. They carried off the lady, but this accident

put an end to the dance; every one thought of retreating and Jean, who could not assume illness, but who was furious at being left on the floor in the middle of the room before Caroline, arose and allowing an energetic oath to escape him, which in his anger he could not restrain, left the drawing-room, pushing right and left those whom he met on his way.

CHAPTER VII

Jean Declares Himself

So far from doubting the conduct of his godson, of whose change of domicile (and of feeling) he was still ignorant, Bellequeue feared only lest Jean's melancholy should develop a more alarming character, and while playing cards with Rose he could not dissimulate the anxiety which the young man's misanthropy and abstention from society, and the marked change in his manners and habits caused him.

The little maid smiled maliciously while her master was speaking, then she answered him by asking a question,—

"Why is it that you say M. Jean has become a misanthrope? I should have thought he was anything but that."

"Why, Rose?—but there, you don't know what Chopard came to tell me," answered Bellequeue.

"Oh, yes, I understand very well," said Rose, with a saucy toss of the head.

"During the five weeks and more that my gout has kept me here (it's your turn to play, my child) I thought that my godson would hardly

leave the Chopards' house, and that the sight of Adelaide would appease his grief. But no, not at all, Jean has never even once put his foot in their house."

"I'm cheating you, monsieur, you have something to take there."

"That's true — you are right. Not to go and see his future intended! a woman who has made him so much in love with her that his disposition, his tastes have changed from black to white."

"If M. Jean hasn't been to your Chopards," suggested Rose, "that's not to say that he's been nowhere else."

"Where do you think he should go?" asked the godfather. "He no longer cares for billiards, or smoking, or skittles."

"He likes something else, perhaps, that you don't know of."

"And I who was so rejoiced at his being settled and hoped soon to have to wear my tight-fitting pantaloons. They become me well, don't they, Rose?" said her master.

"I'm cheating you, monsieur, because you can take three and you have only taken two," was the little maid's only answer.

"Ah, it's that devil of a Jean who makes my mind wander. You are getting to be quite an expert at cards, Rose."

"No, it's you who don't play as well as you used to."

The game was again interrupted by the bell, Rose went to the door and saw M. Chopard, whose frightened face announced something of extraordinary interest.

"Well, how now, my dear Chopard?" cried Bellequeue, on seeing the retired distiller, "what news is there? You've seen Jean, no doubt; what has he said to you? why hasn't he been to your house?"

"As for news, certainly there's plenty of that," said M. Chopard, wiping his forehead. Then he looked at Rose, who remained there, and signed to Bellequeue to make him understand that he wished to be alone with him. Then Bellequeue said to the little maid, in a honeyed tone,—

"Rose, leave us for a moment, my dear child."

Rose glanced angrily at Chopard, and left the drawing-room, slamming the door after her with such force as to make the partitions tremble.

"Look you now, this Chopard doesn't want to speak before me," she said to herself, "a mean old ratafia pedler! But that won't prevent me from hearing what he says."

And making a round of the rooms, Mademoiselle Rose placed herself behind a glass door which opened into the drawing-room. The glass was covered by a green curtain, and from behind the door one could hear all that was said in the drawing-room by means of a broken pane, which Mademoiselle Rose would never have mended.

Mademoiselle Rose placed herself behind a glass door.

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"My dear fellow," said Chopard, "I begged you to send away your maid because I wish to speak to you on family matters which concern my daughter's feelings. You feel that I did well?"

"Exactly so, I was about to tell her to go myself."

"That's not true," said Rose to herself, "he would never have said that to me."

"My dear Bellequeue, I went to our young man's —"

"Well, what then?"

"First of all, Jean no longer lives in his old neighborhood."

"What? he has moved without informing me?"

"He lives in the Rue de Provence, Chaussée-d'Antin."

"Where all the dandies live? the fine fellow has launched himself!"

"I should say he has launched himself."

"Is it love which can have given him this idea?"

"I don't know whether it is love, but I know that he hasn't a kitchen in his new apartment, and love without a kitchen, my friend, is — well, it's a fire without a flame — rather good that, eh?"

"And very true; that's to say, it's a fire that smokes."

"I went to the Rue de Provence to find our young man. The house was fine — everything correct and proper. I even made a pun on his staircase, but I can't remember it now."

"You can tell it me some other time. Go on?"

"At length I reached Jean Durand's lodging. He was not there."

"The devil! that's vexatious!"

"Yes, but I am crafty, I made the servant talk."

"Has he a man-servant?"

"I should say so indeed — a lackey in the shape of a valet."

"Hang it; what style!"

"I questioned the servant while I looked around the apartment, where, as I said, there is no kitchen. Do you know, my dear fellow, how our young man passes his time?"

"In weeping?"

"Not at all — in frequenting the theatres, the promenades, the parties, in riding on horseback, and in changing his clothes several times a day."

"Oh, by Jove, can it be possible?"

"Yes, my dear Bellequeue, your godson — who is it that's laughing like that? It seems to come from behind that glass door!"

"I didn't hear anything; you must have been mistaken."

"Well, now, my friend, don't you think that M. Jean's conduct is very extraordinary?"

"I confess that it passes my understanding."

"It passes my wife's, and mine also, but, as my daughter says, things cannot remain as they are."

"Oh, don't be uneasy, my friend, tomorrow I'll go and look after the young man."

"That's the idea. In the first place, my daughter is in a false position — at least, that is what she says."

"She is perfectly right."

"It's necessary that the boy should explain himself. There are no two ways about it; either he wants to marry my daughter, or he doesn't want to — hey?"

"That's quite correct."

"It seems to me that it's necessary not to recede from that point."

"My dear Chopard, it is impossible that Jean should not wish to marry your beautiful Adelaide, for you have remarked with me how much in love he was."

"Certainly, I have remarked it."

"A young man who from the first never gave a thought to gallantry and whom we have seen in so short a time become dandified, putting on pomatum, curling his hair, giving up his pipe and wearing gloves—"

"And heaving sighs all over the place."

"Well, what has wrought all these changes? Love. Whom is he going to marry? Your daughter. Well, it isn't possible that this love should have evaporated without cause."

"No, in my opinion, it is impossible."

"Jean is a little peculiar, rather heedless —"

"All savants are."

"He runs to the play and goes into society to

distract himself from his grief for the loss he has sustained."

"That's what I said to Adelaide."

"Perhaps he doesn't want to reappear before her until he has acquired more elegant manners and a more refined tone."

"I believe that you've hit the right nail on the head!"

"But tomorrow I will go and see him — I will speak to him. I won't leave him till we've fixed the day of his marriage."

"That's the thing. And you'll come and let us know what answer he gives you."

"It is even possible that I shall bring back the wanderer to your arms."

"To our arms; that's very good, that'll make a scene. Come, my dear Bellequeue, I'll act in conjunction with you — Jean knows the charms, the talents, the amiability of my daughter — it seems to me he can't flatter himself that he'll meet another woman like her, and I don't think it will do any harm to tell him that she has discovered a way of preserving currants in brandy, the bunches entire, which has never been done before."

"I shall slip that into the conversation."

"I must go back to my womenfolk. Our dear Adelaide is in such a state of agitation. She is excessively nervous."

"Quiet her, my friend; I'll answer for my godson."

"That's all-sufficient; we can count on him, then. By the way, my daughter, who has a deal of sense, even when she's not thinking about it, told me to tell you that if your gout prevented you from going out you had only to take a cab."

"That's exactly what I counted on doing."

"Good-by, then — till tomorrow."

M. Chopard returned home, and Bellequeue arranged in his mind what he should say to his godson on the morrow.

On leaving the ball Jean was in a state of despair; he did not doubt that Madame Dorville thought him foolish, awkward and completely ridiculous in a drawing-room; the shouts of laughter which came from all parts of the room when he and his partner fell still rang in his ears. He could still see the mocking glances which were cast upon him, and hear the whisperings of which he was the object, to all of which he would have been supremely indifferent had not Caroline been there; but to feel his pride humiliated before one whom he so greatly desired to please was a punishment which would long rankle in his memory.

Jean went home and shut himself in his room without saying a word to his servant, who judged from his master's ill-humor that the latter had not found the ball very amusing. During the whole night Jean could not get to sleep for thinking of Caroline. He no longer sought to hide from himself what he felt.

"Rose was right," he said to himself, "I am in love. Ah, I had never loved until I saw Caroline. I did not know what love is. I thought I knew, I thought I could never love further. It is only now that I feel all that one experiences when near a woman he adores. I think only of her, I can occupy myself only with her — all that does not tend to bring me near her bores me, displeases me, is insupportable to me. It seems to me that I've heard it said that at my age love is the sweetest sentiment, and since I have felt it I am like a madman, I haven't a moment's calm, a moment's happiness. Yesterday, however, when I saw her, I felt beside myself; it seemed to me that my heart would burst, but my happiness did not last long. Those men who surrounded her, who were talking to her, and her amiable expression as she answered them, made me feel ill. The idea of my falling in love with a woman of the great world — with a modish woman, who looks upon me as a rustic, who will never love me — confound it all! Come, here I am swearing again, and if I wish to talk with her I mustn't swear any more."

Gersac came to see Jean on the day after the ball, to ask him if he had enjoyed himself the evening before.

"Enjoyed myself!" answered Jean, looking at Gersac ill-humoredly. "When I conducted myself so ill?"

"What do you mean? What did you do? Are you vexed because you lost at écarté?"

"Oh, no, I wasn't thinking about that, I merely played for the sake of doing something, I scarcely thought about it. But my awkward bearing, my embarrassment—"

"Pshaw, you are too modest, you are beginning to hold your own very well indeed. There are thousands of persons who are not your equals who manage to cut a figure in society by means of their assurance and self-sufficiency, which serve to veil their incapacity or their stupidity."

"And see what I did in essaying to dance the English. Can you tell me that that didn't make a laughing stock of me?"

"Why, no, really it did not; they only laughed at your partner. Had you had a young and pretty partner all the blame would have been on your side; but, fortunately for you, you were dancing with a woman who was half a century old and loaded with flowers and feathers. She looked so comical when she fell that really, it was impossible to keep one's countenance. They saw her only and not one took any notice of you. I looked for you after the English, but you had left."

"It seemed to me that all eyes were fixed on me, so I fled."

"How singular you are! Come with me this evening, I'll take you to another big party; only, you shan't dance the English."

"No, I thank you, I don't wish to go into society again until I feel I am able to take my place there and to mingle in the conversation without fear of making gross blunders."

"What folly; why, it is only by going into society that you can get accustomed to it."

"I tell you again, I have much to learn before going out again."

"Why, my dear fellow, you are young, you are rich, a little polish, knowledge of the world is all that's necessary to you."

"My dear Gersac, I need something more than polish."

Seeing that insistence was useless, Gersac left Jean, who was deep in reflection when the bell again rang, and presently Bellequeue was ushered into his godson's apartment.

"What! it's you, my dear friend," said Jean, running to meet Bellequeue, who looked admiringly around the room.

"Yes, of course it's me. It was highly necessary that I should come, for, by Jove! you would have left me to die without troubling yourself about me."

"Oh, forgive me, I was wrong I confess; but I have been busy about so many things. Have you been ill?"

"A slight attack of gout, that's all; but I think it's passed now. I feel very much easier today, and my leg is not swollen at all, is it?"

"I don't see that it is."

"I must sit down, however, ouf! I came in a cab. You put me to expense, you worthless fellow, but I flatter myself that I shan't regret it. Might one inquire, first, why your lordship has changed your domicile?"

"My dear godfather, the apartment I occupied recalled the loss I had sustained too vividly — and then this neighborhood suited me better."

"The neighborhood is fine, I admit, but I don't think ours is to be despised either."

"I don't despise it."

"No matter, let's leave the subject of the apartment; that's not the most essential thing. I came here about something more important than that. Tell me, rather, how it happens that you've not been to the Chopards' since the evening I took you there. I am told that you go to the play and are seen on the promenades and in society and yet you don't go to see your intended wife. I confess, my dear fellow, that I don't understand your conduct, and beautiful Adelaide herself is alarmed about it. However, it is now four months since your mother's death, and you can no longer delay speaking of your marriage, setting the time for your union. You know very well that all the preparations were made before Madame Durand's illness. I had everything arranged, my costume all ready. Do you want me to wait until the moths have got into my tight-fitting pantaloons?"

Jean did not answer immediately, he rose and walked agitatedly about the room. Bellequeue, who was seated in an easy chair followed the young man with his eyes.

"My dear godfather," said Jean at length, pausing before Bellequeue, "I have a confession to make to you."

"A confession! Some present you wish to give to your betrothed, and you don't know how to present it to her?"

"It has nothing at all to do with that. Give me time — it costs me much to tell you, for it will make you angry, but it is essential that I should confess it to you."

"What is it, then? Explain yourself, my dear boy. Don't keep me on tenter hooks."

"Well, the fact is, I do not want to marry Mademoiselle Chopard."

Bellequeue started back and barely missed overturning himself and his armchair; however, he recovered his balance and exclaimed,—

"You don't want to — what was that you said? I must have misunderstood you."

Jean repeated, in a decided tone and very distinctly,—

"I don't wish to marry Mademoiselle Chopard."

This time Bellequeue rose, smote his forehead despairingly and cried,—

"This passes all belief! These things suffocate one. You don't want to marry your intended,

your betrothed — the pretty Adelaide to whom you are engaged?"

"As for engaged, my dear godfather, it was you who invented that ceremony yourself; I know very well that one doesn't become engaged to a girl merely because one presses her hand."

"Pardon me, monsieur; on the contrary, one is very much engaged by doing so. What did you want to press her hand for, if you please? When they have set the day for the wedding, when the parents already look upon you as their son, when the young lady is counting upon you — do you think then you can imagine yourself disengaged? Do you think that you can play thus with a family, and with a heart of nineteen?"

Anger almost made Bellequeue eloquent, he walked about the room and forgot that he was recovering from the gout. Jean went up to him and took his hand, saying,—

"My dear godfather, I confess my faults, and I feel perfectly well that I have done much that is wrong in regard to the Chopard family."

"That's all well and good! Marry their daughter, and there will no longer be any question of all that."

"No, I shall not marry their daughter, because I cannot make her happy and because I myself should be very unhappy with her."

"You would be unhappy with a woman whom you worship?"

"Me! I worship Mademoiselle Chopard? I assure you, most emphatically, that I have never thought of such a thing."

"And I, sir, tell you that you have adored her. Haven't we all noticed it? Is it not love which has made you see things so differently? and your new way of attiring yourself? and your leaving off smoking and cards; and your sighs and your melancholy — were you doing all that that you might laugh at us?"

"Oh, no, I swear to you —"

"That your love should have passed so quickly is what I do not understand — but the damsel's love has not been thus extinguished. You have kindled a flame in this young girl's heart. It's all very natural; she was very much taken with you, and in a young and untried heart these things take a strong hold, look you."

"Oh, I feel that as well as you can."

"Certainly, Mademoiselle Chopard will not lack a husband! She's a strapping fine girl, so well put together. She knows so many things and preserves currants in brandy just as they grow in the bunch, and makes walnut brandy as if she had always lived in the Black Forest. One doesn't often meet a young woman like that, monsieur."

"Why, my dear godfather, she may put anything she likes in brandy, but I cannot marry her. I confess that I ought to have told her sooner — but there! I did not know how to do it."

"I tell you, monsieur, that you shall marry her; you have gone too far to draw back. And me, monsieur; I who have thrust myself to the front for you — you are compromising me in this matter. It was I who asked the hand of the superb Adelaide for you in marriage."

"I didn't ask you to do so."

"No, but you were not displeased at the notion."

"Because then I had not reflected."

"And why the devil have you reflected? It was necessary for you to marry, that was all — one reflects after."

"I thought it would be a great deal better to reflect before."

"You can have heard nothing against the young lady which could tarnish her reputation. She is as pure as an icicle."

"No, certainly, I must render that justice to Mademoiselle Chopard; but, as I have told you, I am afraid I can't make her happy."

"Why, don't I tell you she worships you, this girl; that she dreams of you only, that she thinks you gallant, learned even."

"Learned, me! learned! Ah, that's not the truth, why no, I never would do anything, learn anything. I am well punished for it now. I am an ass and that is all."

"You are an ass?"

"Yes, godfather, I am an ass."

"Listen, my boy, whether you are an ass or not,

it doesn't prevent beautiful Adelaide from loving you and finding you quite to her mind as you are. Come, my dear fellow, be reasonable; don't embroil me with the Chopard family, with people at whose house there is always a cover laid for me — although I don't often profit by that now, because Rose doesn't like me to dine in town. But consider a little; this marriage was arranged and decided upon in your mother's lifetime."

"My mother would have been the first to break the engagement if she had thought it was distasteful to me."

"I tell you that they count on your fulfilling your word, and that you must marry her. A man can't frequent another's house for a long period and court his daughter and drink his liqueurs and then leave him in the lurch like this. Things cannot be done in that way, monsieur! And what do you expect I am to go and say to Chopard, to his wife, to the loving Adelaide, who have sent me to find out why they have not seen you?"

"Say anything you please. Make what excuses you like to them, marry their daughter yourself if that will please you."

"Fifteen years ago, monsieur, no one would have said that to me twice! M. Jean — for the last time, are you going to marry Mademoiselle Chopard?"

"No, godfather."

"You have made your decision."

"Most assuredly; my final decision."

"Good-by, you are no longer my godson."

Jean tried to prevent Bellequeue's departure and to calm him but the latter was furious; he pulled his three-cornered hat down to his eyebrows, and going downstairs as fast as his gouty legs would allow him he threw himself into the cab, which was waiting, and ordered the man to drive him home, where he arrived, muttering to himself,—

"How am I going to inform the Chopards of this? how am I to deal the gentle Adelaide such a blow? It is only Rose who can tell me how to get myself out of this scrape. Had I listened to her advice, I should not have mixed myself up in this marriage. Really, a bachelor should do nothing without consulting his housekeeper."

CHAPTER VIII

Papa Chopard as an Ambassador

Unusually perturbed by his interview with his godson Bellequeue went to his room and threw himself into his armchair, without asking for his dressing-gown, without even perceiving that he still had his three-cornered hat on his head.

Rose, having no doubt but that something extraordinarily upsetting had passed between the godfather and his godson, came running with the air of one in haste to bring his comfortable dressing-gown and the Scotch cap which she had herself given to her master for a present on New Year's day.

"Why, what is the matter with you, monsieur?" she said, in a voice full of anxiety. "Here you are all upset! Are you ill? has anything happened? Is it your gout that is troubling you again?"

"Ah, Rose, if you did but know," answered Bellequeue in a trembling voice; "I am very much put out, my dearest."

"But what is the matter, monsieur?" inquired the little maid; "you are perhaps making a great affair out of nothing. Come now, why don't you tell me all about it."

"It is Jean, it's that traitor Jean, who has turned me all upside down."

"In the first place, I don't believe that M. Jean is a traitor, and in the second what has he done so ill, this poor young man?"

"'Poor young man!' you take his part? He has conducted himself in a very unworthy fashion."

"How? Is he gambling? Is he going to the deuce?"

"Much worse than all that, he refuses Mademoiselle Chopard's hand."

Rose recoiled several steps and shouted with laughter, exclaiming,—

"And that's why you come back with such a dismal face? that you look as if you were in the last stages of despair?"

Bellequeue glanced at the little maid with an air of displeasure, as he said,—

"I did not believe, Rose, that you would laugh at a thing which puts me in such a very disagreeable position. This is very bad. You give me a good deal of trouble, Rose."

Bellequeue appeared so much affected that Rose laughed no longer, but again drew near her master, and said to him,—

"Monsieur, if you had listened to me, remember, in the first place, you would not have been so quick to propose this marriage."

"That's true, Rose, I remember very well, but —but—"

"'But—but—' I don't see now why you should make yourself ill because your godson has changed his opinion."

"It is because, Rose—"

"Is it your duty to arrange a marriage for Mademoiselle Chopard?"

"No, undoubtedly not."

"Is it your fault if a young man of twenty-one years of age perceives that he doesn't love the one whom he was going to marry?"

"I don't say—"

"Is it necessary, after all, that on account of Mademoiselle Adelaide's fine eyes M. Jean should make himself unhappy for the rest of his days by marrying a woman whom he does not love?"

"It is certain—"

"Don't you love your godson, a boy whom you saw born, better than this big Adelaide who always looks as if she were carrying buckets of water, in pattens."

"Why, yes, of course I love my godson better, but—"

"Finally, you will make yourself ill for these Chopards, who'll feel themselves under no sort of obligation to you for it, nor will you advance yourself further in their friendship, for that will fade to nothing at M. Jean's determination."

"My faith, no; in fact, you open my eyes, Rose."

"That's very fortunate."

"As you say, my making myself ill won't bring about Adelaide's marriage to Jean. But what torments me is the desire to know how I shall tell all this to the Chopards."

"You will say quite simply that M. Jean has answered you."

"It will be a frightful blow for that young girl."

"Pshaw, don't bother about that, she has the strength to bear it. Wait, you've still got your coat and hat on. One must never put off disagreeable things till tomorrow; go immediately to the Chopards', so that the thing may be finished."

Bellequeue arose with a resolute air, exclaiming,—

"You are right, Rose, we must finish it. I'll go to the Chopards'. Oh!—my leg. I am not yet very easy and I have sent away the cab, I can never go there on foot."

"There are plenty of cabs in the neighborhood. Come down, monsieur, and I will go and look for one for you while you are getting down."

"I am spending a terrible lot of money today, Rose."

"That's what you get for trying to make marriages. Here, come along, I'll give you an arm."

The little maid did not leave her master time to change his opinion. She led him as quickly as he could go. Arrived at the foot of the staircase, Rose ran to look for a cab, which she brought presently to the door.

At the moment of getting into the vehicle, Bellequeue felt his courage fail him, and he scratched his ear, saying,—

"Rose, suppose I don't go till tomorrow to the Chopards'. I think this is their dinner-time, and it is not perhaps proper —"

"No, no, monsieur, it's only half-past one, and nobody dines at that hour. Go, and try to be firm, and settle this business. It would seem as though these Chopards were sultans, and that nobody may speak to them. Fie! it's dreadful to be so flabby as that."

Saying these words, Rose pushed her master on to the steps; the coachman closed the door, the little maid gave him the address, saying to him,—

"Drive fast and you will have something to drink."

The coachman mounted his seat, and whipped his horses so well that poor Bellequeue arrived at the Chopards' door still uncertain whether he should go or not.

"O good Heavens! Here I am," said Bellequeue, as the cab stopped.

However, remembering Rose's advice, he raised his head, alighted from the cab, ordering the cabby to wait, and leaving the door still open, because he wished to be sure that nothing should detain him in getting away, then having drawn down his three-cornered hat to his eyebrows, at the risk of disarranging his hair, Bellequeue went up to the

Chopards'. The family were gathered together; they were expecting M. Bellequeue impatiently. Mademoiselle Adelaide had already taken three glasses of water sweetened with syrup of orange-flowers, and Madame Chopard kept repeating to her,—

"Be calm, my child, our friend Bellequeue has told your father that he will bring your betrothed in his arms."

"Yes, certainly," said M. Chopard, walking about the room, "Bellequeue has taken the thing to heart; that's natural because when a love affair is in the question hearts are trumps."

Somebody rang.

"Here they are," cried Madame Chopard, while Mademoiselle Adelaide cogitated as to the face she ought to make, and whether anger should yield to love in the expression of her physiognomy, but before she had decided the door opened. Bellequeue appeared alone, he held his handkerchief in his hand, and his expression indicated that he did not bring good news.

"You are alone, M. Bellequeue?" exclaimed Madame Chopard in surprise.

"Yes, madame, I am alone," said Bellequeue in the tone of a man who has played the confidant in tragedies all his life.

"M. Jean didn't think fit to accompany you," said Adelaide in a stifled voice.

Bellequeue, who had pulled out his handker-

chief beforehand, because he hoped to weep as he went in, decided to blow his nose, and put it back in his pocket, as he muttered with embarrassment,—

"Young Durand, my godson — otherwise Jean — is not with me — that's true — however I had a cab by the hour — and I have still got it down below at this moment — for my leg — I feel that my gout — the times are changed — there is no doubt about that."

"There is a new moon tomorrow night," said M. Chopard, taking a pinch of snuff with an air of satisfaction, because he always had three or four puns on the first quarter. But Mademoiselle Adelaide rose vivaciously, exclaiming,—

"I beg of you, papa — M. Bellequeue didn't come here to talk about the moon or about cabs. I cannot remain any longer in this situation. What did you say to M. Jean? why did he not come? and why did we hear nothing of him? Speak M. Bellequeue, I beg of you."

"That's true," said M. Chopard, assuming an air of displeasure. "It is not a question of joking. What did the young man say?"

Bellequeue, seeing himself thus pressed, pulled out his handkerchief again, and winking his eyes as hard as he could in order to render them moist, he said at length,—

"It's very painful to me — it's even very cruel to be charged with so disagreeable a message, but

in fact, my dear friends, I am not my godson, if I were certainly —"

Bellequeue interrupted himself to blow his nose in a prolonged manner to make believe that he wept, while Mademoiselle Chopard cried,—

"Come to the end, M. Bellequeue, I entreat you, I am prepared for all."

"My daughter begs you to come to an end, M. Bellequeue," said Madame Chopard.

"From this moment, she is prepared for all," said M. Chopard. "I don't see, in fact, my friend, what prevents you from coming to an end."

"I will tell you all about it, then," answered Bellequeue, putting his handkerchief back in his pocket, "it must be that a foolish spirit — the devil rather — has taken possession of this young man. Jean renders every justice to the virtue, to the charms, to the good qualities of the beautiful Adelaide. He said a great deal to me about that, oh, a great deal —"

"And finally, M. Bellequeue?"

"Finally, after eulogizing thus, he told me that he could not marry her."

"He no longer wishes to?"

"I don't say that he no longer wishes to do so, but he cannot, because he no longer feels himself worthy of so much happiness."

"Mamma, I feel ill," said Adelaide throwing herself into an armchair.

"My daughter is losing her senses," cried

Madame Chopard, running towards Adelaide. "M. Chopard, get something, I beg of you."

"Here," said M. Chopard, running from one side to the other, "what must I get, an apricot? a prune? a cherry?"

"I'll go and look for a doctor," cried Bellequeue, and profiting by the circumstances he precipitately left the drawing-room, descending the stairs two at a time, at the risk of pitching from the top to the bottom, and darted into the cab, crying to the cabby,—

"Home, where you started from, as fast as you can go," and to himself, "When we get there, I'll wrap my leg up in a flannel and have the Chopards told that my gout has come back on the wing."

As Madame Chopard advanced with a flask and her husband with a glass jar, Adelaide rose, and strode about the drawing-room exclaiming,—

"This cannot be so settled. It's M. Jean's duty to give his reasons; or, at least, he ought to give them."

"Certainly, it is necessary that he should tell them," cried M. Chopard, following his daughter step by step.

"Well, now," said Adelaide, "what has become of M. Bellequeue?"

"He's gone to look for a doctor, my dear," said Madame Chopard. "Here, my child, take a whiff from this flask."

"I don't want a whiff of anything, I have no need of medicine, I want nothing but Jean; he alone is necessary for me, I shall die if I do not marry him."

"Dear child, how much she loves him. Oh, M. Chopard, this is a passion indeed."

"It's the essence of love," answered the papa, smiting his forehead, "she would put her husband in syrup. This young man doesn't know what he is refusing."

"Papa, I entreat you, go immediately and look for M. Jean," said Adelaide, trying to appear calmer. "You know very well that he has affronted me in a manner which reflects upon you."

"She's right, M. Chopard, that reflects upon us. It is necessary at least that M. Jean should give you good reasons, and M. Bellequeue has told us nothing but nonsense."

"That's the truth," said Chopard; "Bellequeue hasn't told us anything. I think, besides, he has conducted himself very badly in the whole affair."

"Very badly. You had no need of him in order to communicate with M. Jean. Go, papa, go and find this young man who adores me, and whose conduct is shocking. If I were a man this would not have happened, and M. Jean would have given me a reason. Go, papa, be a man and I will say nothing further about it."

Adelaide pressed her father's hand, and went

back to her room to give herself up to the feelings which agitated her. M. Chopard remained with his wife, and looked at her with an expression of indecision.

"Yes, I shall make him see that I am a man, and if the fine fellow won't marry my daughter, he shall tell me why."

"Don't be too much carried away by anger, M. Chopard, I beg of you."

"Oh, how excited I am. What if I should carry Jean some new experiments of my daughter — the currants and grapes in bunches, and the plums without stones, they might open the heedless fellow's eyes, and, in any case, it cannot fail to touch him if I do so. I always have excellent ideas. Madame Chopard, put these two jars one under each arm for me. I can carry them like that. If the young man does not yield that will not be my fault, I am going to attack him in all his senses."

M. Chopard set out with a jar under each arm, and arrived all in a perspiration at Jean's, who since Bellequeue's visit had given himself up to reflection. The servant went to announce this new visitor to his master, but Chopard followed close upon his heels, and was in Jean's presence before the latter had answered his valet.

"It's me, my dear fellow," said Chopard, very much embarrassed with the jars, and looking around for a place to put them. Jean motioned

for the servant to leave them, and hastened to offer a chair to M. Chopard, who at last managed to place each jar on a table, and seated himself wiping his forehead.

"Ouf! these are heavy."

"Why, M. Chopard, did you come on foot with those."

"Yes, my dear fellow, I was so preoccupied that I never even dreamed of taking a cab."

"You are very warm, will you take something?"

"My faith, yes, that's very well thought of, a little glass of kirsche, on the condition that you will keep me company."

Jean had two small glasses brought, he moistened his lips, out of politeness to M. Chopard, who swallowed the kirsche, exclaiming,—

"That's good kirsche, that's very good. Why, since I have had kidney trouble I drink it rather than rum."

Jean tried to smile, and M. Chopard reseated himself, saying,—

"Oh, what the deuce! I didn't come here to talk about kirsche. My boy, we have just seen your godfather, Bellequeue. He tells us that you no longer wish to marry our daughter, but he must have made some mistake about that; it cannot possibly be otherwise. In the first place, for her part, Adelaide is still disposed to marry you. You cannot have a quarrel all by yourself. So I said

to myself, I'll go and find Jean and I am sure that we shall understand each other, because I am sure he is a good fellow who formerly drank deep. I have profited by the occasion to bring you these two new experiments by my daughter — some bunches of currants; you must tell me how you like them, my friend. Shall we taste them?"

"No, monsieur," said Jean, looking troubled and drawing near to M. Chopard, who seemed more occupied with his jars than the subject of his visit. "I am really sorry, monsieur, that you have given yourself the trouble of coming to my house, it was for me to go to yours. I feel all the wrong I have done, I feel that I have acted very badly towards you and towards your daughter."

"Pshaw, we needn't wait for ceremony. Come to dinner tomorrow with us, we'll make the corks fly, and we'll set the day for the wedding."

"I cannot, monsieur. What my godfather has told you was the result of grave reflection, and it is with pain that I am forced to repeat it to you. I render due justice to the charms, the talents, and the excellent qualities of your daughter, but I cannot be her husband, for I shall not make her happy."

"Yes, my dear fellow, you will make her happy, I'll answer to you for that. She told me so again just now. What, the devil! you have every quality for making a good husband. You are big, well-built, a good-looking fellow."

"Oh, monsieur, I think that other things are necessary to captivate a woman's heart."

"What else are you speaking of, my boy?"

"I wish to say, monsieur, that it is necessary to love her, for without love it seems to me that it is very sad to bind one's self for life."

"Oh, you wanted to talk of love. That's just what I expected, my dear fellow; you are made for each other exactly. Adelaide is very much taken with you, she does not hide it, you have vanquished her pride. She never leaves off singing 'Tu triomphes, bel Alcindor!' you know, with the trills; she knows the whole of it. As to you, my boy, we have seen you, we have noticed all the changes which love has worked in you; they were as visible as the plums which are in this jar—without stones they are—and you cannot deny—"

"I repeat to you, monsieur, that everybody is mistaken as to the feelings I experienced. I have acted very inconsiderately, and am very blamable, no doubt; but at my age, you must confess, monsieur, that it is much better to confess one's wrongs frankly than to aggravate them by compromising one's happiness and that of another."

M. Chopard, who perceived that Jean would not yield, rose with a very displeased expression, drew his hat on his head, and walked up and down the room, always glancing towards his jars out of the corners of his eyes. Finally he stopped before the young man, compressed his lips, and said,—

"All that, monsieur, means that you have decided not to marry my daughter?"

"It is only too true, monsieur."

"Then, monsieur, I must warn you that I came here to ask your reasons. Oh, I am not one of those fathers so lacking in strength of mind that they take these things like a glass of oil of roses, no, monsieur, I am not one of those fathers."

Jean looked at Chopard in surprise, however, he answered him with a submissive air,—

"I feel, monsieur, that you have the right to act thus about it; if you absolutely exact it, if the assurance of my regret does not suffice you, I am at your orders, monsieur, when you desire it, and you shall settle this with arms of your own choice, the sword, the pistol — whatever you please, in fact."

M. Chopard recoiled four steps, and assumed an affectionate air as he exclaimed,—

"You don't understand me, my man, you are confounding things. My dear fellow, I told you that I asked your reason; it's not a question of swords or pistols, they are the worst of all reasons. Why do you no longer wish to marry my daughter? you must have some motive, some plausible motive, some good reason; that is what I begged you to tell me, and it seems to me you cannot refuse me that."

"Pardon, monsieur, pardon if I thought— "

"There is nothing to pardon, my dear fellow."

"You wish that I should tell you why I decline to marry Mademoiselle Chopard?"

"Yes, my boy, that's what I want, one ought at least to know what ground one stands on."

"Well, M. Chopard, since you exact it — yes, I feel that I owe you the whole truth. Well, you must know then, though I did not say this to my godfather, if I do not marry Mademoiselle Adelaide, it is because I am in love with another."

"You are in love with another, my dear fellow."

"Yes, monsieur, yes, and I have tried in vain to conquer this passion, which will perhaps make my whole life unhappy. I cannot resist it; this love has come, I do not know how, and she who evoked it is incessantly before my eyes. Well, then, monsieur, do you still wish that I should become your daughter's husband? Can I go and offer her a heart burning with love for another?"

"No, my dear fellow, no, certainly — I no longer wish it, even if you should beg me to do so, crying like a calf. Well, now, here at least is a reason, a very good reason, and I am sure that Adelaide will be satisfied with it. My boy, nothing remains to me but to wish you good day. As to these jars, I think that I may as well — at this moment you will not be in a state to appreciate their contents — I am going to carry them back. Good-by my dear fellow, I am going back to my daughter, who is awaiting my return impatiently."

M. Chopard took up the jars in his arms, and

left Jean's house, the latter accompanying him as far as the staircase, but when M. Chopard had departed, Jean said to the servant,—

"Put my things together, tomorrow I shall leave these apartments."

"What, tomorrow, and you have not given notice?"

"No matter, I want to be alone, not to be disturbed every minute — to receive no more visitors, and that no one may know my new address. You will say in the house that I am leaving for Italy, that I am going to travel for some time."

The servant bowed and Jean went out to look for an apartment where they could receive him immediately.

However, M. Chopard had arrived without accident with his jars. Adelaide, who in her impatience had placed herself at the window, that she might the sooner see her father, ran to the staircase to meet him, while Madame Chopard followed her saying,—

"Here is M. Chopard, we are going to know how he has treated M. Jean."

"Well, papa, you have seen him?"

"Certainly, I have seen him," said M. Chopard, continuing to mount the staircase, "and I flatter myself that my errand has not been fruitless. Ouf! it is very heavy, this is."

"Papa, a single word, I beg of you, is it true that he has changed his feelings?"

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"It's the eleventh fainting-fit to-day."

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY JOHN SLOAN.

"I am going to tell you all about that, my dearest. This one weighs much more than the other. Oh, I talked to the young man in good fashion. In the first place I stuck to it he should marry my daughter or he should say why, and I was successful."

"Oh, my own dear papa, let me kiss you," said Adelaide, throwing her arms around his neck.

"Take care, my darling, you will make me break something."

"Then he is willing to marry me?"

"No, he is not willing, but he has told me why."

At this answer, Mademoiselle Adelaide fell back against the banister of the staircase, and in trying to hold her, M. Chopard, forgetful of what he held, extended his right arm, and the jar of plums fell and was broken on the stairs. At the sight of the spilled liqueur, the broken jar, the fruit which rolled along the stairs, M. Chopard seemed petrified, while Madame Chopard sustained her daughter, exclaiming,—

"O my God! it's the eleventh fainting-fit today; poor little thing, she'll succumb to it — but M. Chopard, you came back with such a triumphant expression."

"Madame, I came back with the expression I ought to have," answered M. Chopard in a desperate tone, following with his eye the plums which were rolling down the staircase. "I have fulfilled

my mission very honorably, I flatter myself, and certainly had I known I should have broken this jar I should have left it with the young man, because that might have changed his opinion, his way of looking at things — but that is no reason for — heavens, what an odor, what a perfume they have, why that will embalm the house for a week."

Adelaide at length regained her firmness and went back into the room, her parents following her. M. Chopard after telling his servant to go and repair the misfortune which had happened, and to try and save the plums from the shipwreck, went to his daughter, who begged him to remember what M. Jean had said to excuse his unworthy conduct.

"My dearest, he has given me a reason, and a very good reason."

"That is not possible, papa, nobody could have a good reason for acting as he has. Well, then, let us hear this reason."

"Well, then, my dear, if he doesn't want to marry you it is because he is in love with some one else."

"In love with some one else," cried Adelaide, becoming in the same moment red, pale and green, "he is in love with some one else?"

"O heavens, she is going to have the twelfth fainting-fit," cried Madame Chopard, going toward her daughter.

"No, mother," said Adelaide, her eyes flashing furiously, as she rose and clenched her fist, "no,

I shall not faint for a monster, an ungrateful fellow, a man unworthy of inspiring a true love, which he is incapable of knowing."

"Delightfully spoken," said M. Chopard, "certainly he does not know love, that fellow, and never will."

"Did he tell you the name of his flame, papa?"

"No, my faith, I didn't even dream of asking him who it was; but if you want me to go back —without the jars this time—"

"It is useless, papa, I shall know whom, I shall know all. I shall discover this black treachery. I shall know the one for whom he has so shamefully outraged me; but he shall yet say that it is not she, that it is me he will marry. I have fixed my mind on him, and I will be his wife as surely as I break this flask."

Saying these words, Adelaide threw on the floor a flask of old cognac. After this exploit, she ran and shut herself up in her room. Monsieur and Madame Chopard looked at each other, and remained for sometime amazed. At length the mamma cried,—

"I don't understand what to make of it, she calls him a monster, and yet she wants him still."

"What I can see is that this day has been very unlucky. It is very fortunate for us that we have only one daughter to marry; otherwise the whole house would have to go then."

"Oh, M. Chopard, we must forgive her, the

dear child, she has so much grief, she knows so well how to love."

"Hang it, we have proof of that. Oh, love, love, you push us to terrible extremities."

"Oh, M. Chopard, under such circumstances it is necessary to have the patience of an angel not to get angry."

"That's true, Madame Chopard, one must have the patience of an angel, and yet it is not certain that the angels have any."

CHAPTER IX

A Year's Employment

Several months had elapsed since the grand party at which Madame Dorville had met Jean, and at which his evening's recreation had come to so disastrous an end. The summer had passed and winter had returned, bringing to the city the fashionable women who come back there in search of pleasures and compliments, balls and noise. For some of these ladies the country offered but few attractions, and they went to their country estates, often most delightfully situated in the midst of all that nature offers of the beautiful and picturesque, only because it was good form to be away from Paris for four or five months, and they greatly preferred being bored to being out of the fashion.

Caroline, however, found the country charming. She loved to return there, to find herself free, far from the tumult of the world, and for a time from compliments, those foolish speeches of which the continual repetition wearies those to whom they are addressed. No doubt Caroline was flattered at pleasing, at being sought after and listened to with pleasure. However, to her right thinking and

delicate mind these gratifications were of little moment. One endures them from habit, but they hold a small place in a loving soul, and leave it still much to wish for in the way of happiness. It is only a coquette for whom the pleasures of self-love are the first good.

Winter had at last brought Caroline to Paris. She returned to society rather from custom than real taste for it; they again paid court to her, for a young widow, rich and pretty, is the continual object of flattering attentions from men, but Caroline, while gracefully welcoming the always increasing number of her adorers, did not show to any one of them a marked preference. Each one of these gentlemen was charmed with the amiable smile with which she received his compliments and the cheerfulness with which she listened to the pretty things which he said to her, still no one could flatter himself that he had touched the heart of the young widow or had made her sigh in secret, which is immeasurably more difficult than to make one smile before everybody.

However, Madame Dorville was sometimes dreamy; at twenty-one years of age a tender heart experiences the need of loving, and in the midst of the pleasures, the vortex of the world, surrounded even with a swarm of admirers, it feels a void, a secret lassitude, for which sometimes it cannot account even to itself.

Among the young men who paid assiduous

court to Caroline, Valcourt was one of those who seemed the most taken with her charms, and who showed himself the most ardently gallant towards the young widow. Valcourt had fortune, birth, a handsome face; he had received a brilliant education and was not devoid of wit. He thought that no one could resist him, and it was this persuasion which always made him fail with the women, for fatuity throws a veil over our advantages instead of bringing them out, and always causes others to presume that those who have this defect possess very little mind. Valcourt easily found occasion to present himself at Madame Dorville's, for she received every week, and Madame Beaumont, who knew the family of our exquisite, had introduced him. Valcourt was a good musician, he had a pretty voice, but he marred his singing by airs and graces and pretensions of manners; with extended neck and affected smile, he destroyed all the pleasure of those who heard him sing. However, he was very much sought after in society, where pretensions are much less criticised than a lack of the knowledge of good form. Madame Dorville appeared to receive Valcourt with pleasure, she laughed at the tender avowals he addressed to her; she answered his declarations with pleasantry, and treated lightly that which he seemed to wish to end very seriously; for Valcourt had become very much in love with the pretty widow, as much at least as a person who is in love with himself can be in love

with anybody else; but he was piqued by the fact that Caroline received his homage laughingly, and could not conceive that she could resist his glances, his sighs; the desire of making a conquest of Madame Dorville's heart took stronger hold of Valcourt every day, he would have liked to be incessantly at Caroline's house, but he had enough wit not to render himself importunate and too much knowledge of the world to abuse his privilege of going there sometimes to pay his court.

In the midst of pleasures, overwhelmed by compliments, and enabled by means of her fortune to satisfy all her fancies, many women would have been entirely happy. Caroline's maid, a very simple young girl but strongly attached to her mistress, was astonished sometimes at hearing her sigh, and when that happened Louise would cry,—

"Good heavens, madame, why are you so sad?"

Caroline would look at the maid smiling, and say,—

"No, Louise, I am not sad, why do you ask me that?"

"Because you sighed, madame."

"Oh, well, do you suppose that one sighs only when in trouble?"

"Of course I do."

"You are mistaken, Louise, people sigh very often — sometimes without knowing why."

"That's funny! To be sure, madame cannot be unhappy. When one can do all one wishes,

and is beloved by all her friends, like madame, when one can dress well, like madame, and one can go every day to a ball, or a play, or a concert, one can't have a moment to be lonely."

"Do you think so, Louise? Oh, my dear, one gets used to everything. These pleasures which are constantly recurring, but which are really always the same, soon cease to prove attractive to us. We need something truer and sweeter. When my mother was alive I never felt lonely for a moment, we talked often of things of very little importance, but the slightest words of people who are dear to us have a charm, a value that no others have. In the intimacy of those who love each other so many things are understood without speaking. Oh, Louise, how much I regret those simple conversations with my mother."

Caroline's eyes were brimming with tears, and Louise also felt her own moisten, then she added, after a moment,—

"Oh, certainly, it is nice to have a mother, but when one is young and beautiful, like madame, one may have other feelings; madame will not always remain a widow."

To this Caroline answered nothing, she seemed to be musing again, and Louise dared not say another word. Already the winter was partly gone without bringing the least change to the situation of the pretty widow. Valcourt was still assiduously attentive, he wanted to make society

think that he had obtained an advantage over his rivals, and that it was he whom Madame Dorville preferred. Some of those persons thought, in fact, that the seductive dandy would shortly become Caroline's husband; but those who were on more intimate terms with Madame Dorville noticed nothing yet which could make them think that Valcourt would be successful.

Jean had not again presented himself at Madame Dorville's, nor had he been mentioned to her by the people in her set. Caroline herself had not once pronounced his name, and poor Jean seemed totally forgotten, till one evening, when Caroline had some people at home, they spoke of the magnificent party given the year before by the old man of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré.

"How was it that you were not there, M. Valcourt?"

"I believe that I was then at Boulogne, where I went for the sea bathing. I was very sorry that I was not in Paris on that occasion, for I knew the fête could not but be delightful."

A glance directed to Caroline was intended to convey to her the idea that it was to her this compliment was addressed, but she did not seem to pay any attention to it.

"Well, what amused me above everything," resumed the young lady, "and what I never shall forget, was a gentleman who was thrown to the floor with his partner while dancing the English."

"Really, do you mean it? that must have been delightful."

"You must have noticed it too, Caroline, it seems to me that it was the same young man that I saw here one morning."

"Whom?" said Madame Beaumont, "the one who smelled so horribly of tobacco? Was it he, my dear?"

Caroline answered with a little embarrassment,—

"Yes — yes, it was he."

"Oh, by Jove," cried Valcourt, "how the deuce did he come to be at such a brilliant gathering?"

"It seems to me, monsieur," answered Caroline, rather piqued, "that since he visited my house he could be received elsewhere without compromising his host."

"Ah, pardon, a thousand pardons," resumed Valcourt, who felt that he had committed an indiscretion, "I had not the least intention of offending you. But if the gentleman did come to your house, we all know the reason, we know the obligation under which you lay to him; but you must permit me to think that but for that you would never have become acquainted with one who is so entirely out of your sphere."

"No doubt," said Madame Beaumont, "this young man is honest enough, I have no doubt about it, and according to what you have told me he has a fortune, but all that does not prevent his being very much out of place in a drawing-room."

"Why, he seemed to me much less awkward when I saw him at the fête," said Caroline. "He seemed more accustomed to society. Perhaps he was timid when you saw him here."

"Oh, my dear, it was not timidity which made him smell of the pipe — "

"And he swore like a trooper!"

"Oh, really," exclaimed Valcourt, "Madame Dorville has taken monsieur — the deuce! I have forgotten his name — this gentleman, in short, under her protection, but it must have been very droll to see him dance the English, for he did not even know how to come into a drawing-room. Ha, ha, ha!"

Caroline blushed, this conversation seemed to vex her, and she answered Valcourt with a little acidity.

"If one were to criticise all the ridiculous people one sees incessantly in society, monsieur, one would not have a moment's time for anything else."

Valcourt did not answer. He was greatly piqued at Caroline's defense of a man whom he thought so very much beneath him; however, the conversation was changed, and Jean being no longer under discussion Madame Dorville regained her usual pleasant manner to everybody, even to Valcourt, and they left her house delighted with the grace with which she had done the honors.

Was Jean totally forgotten again? If Caroline was pensive, was it he to whom her thoughts were

given? Is it likely that a woman of the world, overwhelmed with compliments, would occupy her mind with a man whom she had only seen four times, who had never addressed a gallant word to her, and who did not even know how to turn a compliment in a suitable manner? But, who knows? so many strange things pass in the depths of our hearts that we should often be embarrassed ourselves to explain our feelings.

When, after a short absence, Madame Dorville went home during the daytime or at night, she never failed to ask her porter if any one had asked for her. If he said some young men had called, she made him repeat their names, and then she would ask,—

"Is that really all? Has nobody else called?"

"No, madame," the porter would answer, and Caroline would go in crumpling up the visiting cards in her hand. The winter wore away. It had seemed very long this year to Caroline, who often said she should like to return to her country house. Already the days were longer, the mornings more beautiful, the trees were bursting into bud, and Louise said to her mistress,—

"We shall soon go back to Luzarche, shall we not?"

"Oh, yes, very soon," said Caroline.

However, weeks rolled by, and they did not go. After a few days, Louise said again,—

"Spring is here, and as madame was wishing

so much to return to the country, no doubt we shall leave soon."

"Yes, next week," answered Caroline.

But that week passed also, without Caroline giving her orders for their departure, and Louise could not understand why her mistress did not do in the springtime that which she had seemed to desire so much in the winter. At the end of June they were still in Paris, when ordinarily they would have been in the country at least two months. The lady's maid dared not ask her mistress again whether they were to leave soon for Luzarche, but one morning Caroline ordered that they should make every preparation for going to the country. On the eve of the day assigned for her departure, Caroline had had many purchases to make, for she had to carry a thousand things from the city, and after ordering the tradesmen to send the things that evening she was returning home, when, at a few steps from her own dwelling, a young man approached timidly, Caroline raised her eyes and recognized Jean.

"What, is it you, monsieur?" said the young woman, with an expression of surprise, which was not at all displeasing to the one who had caused it.

"Yes, madame, forgive me for stopping you, but I could not resist the desire to say good-by to you before your departure for the country."

"But, monsieur, if you have such a desire, what prevents you from calling upon me?"

"I had wished, madame, before visiting you again, to feel myself worthy of that happiness. I hoped to be more at home in your society, in order that you would not have to blush for admitting me to it."

"To blush! Ah, monsieur, have you thought that I ever —"

"Oh, no, not you, madame; I think you too indulgent for that; but in society every one is not so, and indeed I well deserve that they should show astonishment at meeting me there."

Caroline looked at Jean in surprise, the change in his tone responded to that in his manners. He was no longer a brusque, ungainly man, with a common tone and piercing voice, but a young man who was now not at all awkward, and who, in addition to his polished manners, possessed a soft voice which did not weary those who listened to him.

"In truth," said Caroline, "I should hardly recognize you, so prodigious a change has taken place in you; but it is all to your advantage."

"Ah, madame, if that were but true?"

"It seems to me, monsieur, that you need no longer be afraid to go into society."

"Oh, pardon me, madame, I have still many things to learn."

"What, have you acquired a taste for study?"

"Yes, madame."

"By what miracle? for you were an enemy to all work, or so you told me."

"But I am so no longer, my tastes, my desires are not the same since —"

Jean did not finish, he reddened, and Caroline resumed after a moment,—

"We haven't seen you this winter, either in society or at the play."

"No, madame, for nearly a year, since that party where I last met you, I have given myself up to study without relaxation. I wished in a short time to make up for all that I had lost."

"At the age when one can find a thousand distractions, study must seem most painful."

"No, madame, it now has a charm for me, and I apply myself to it with ardor. It seems to me that it brings me nearer to that world which now I should like to know."

"And you have been in Paris all this time?"

"Yes, madame, I have been here."

Jean showed Madame Dorville the entrance of a house which was opposite them.

"What, you live in my street, and I have never met you?"

"But I see you, madame, every day. Seated beside that window, while working, my eyes often seek your dwelling — it is the only relaxation I permit myself. When I feel fatigued by several hours of study, when new difficulties, dry researches render my work more difficult, I look at your windows and seem to find new courage, a new desire to learn. Sometimes I have also seen you

go out, pass within a few steps of me, then my retreat was embellished, my apartment had for me an inestimable value, and I no longer desired to go out, happy in the thought that on the morrow I should perhaps see you again."

Caroline was much moved. She had listened to Jean with an interest which increased with every word which she heard, she felt an emotion which astonished her. He said no more, though she waited for him to speak again. Both of them forgot that they were in the street. When one has so much to say time passes quickly, but these moments of oblivion are always the happiest ones.

At length Jean resumed, timorously,—

"I have perhaps said what vexes you, madame, and you will take it ill that I allow myself to watch your comings out and your goings in."

"Why should I be angry at that, monsieur? You can do in your own apartment as it seems good to you. If your windows overlook mine, it is not surprising that you have looked at them sometimes, and if you have seen me pass, that is very natural, there is nothing in that to make me angry. But a year of retirement, of work, at your age, that is what seems most surprising."

"I assure, you, madame, that this year has passed very quickly; and I should like—"

"Why, really, I don't think we ought to talk in the street any longer. It seems to me that it would be preferable for you to come in with me."

"I was going to say good-by to you, madame."

"You don't wish to come in with me then, monsieur."

"Oh, forgive me, madame, but you have nearly always someone there — one can't speak to you for a moment, and I am not yet prepared for the restraint which society imposes."

"What childish nonsense! Is it for your own benefit alone that you have worked so hard at your books, that you have studied, that you have acquired such polished and pleasing manners, that you have gone to the trouble of changing yourself so entirely?"

"If I only dared to tell you, madame, to what this change is really due."

"I really must go in, everybody is looking at us; we have been here for some time now."

"It seemed to me that we had only been here for a moment."

"Two persons chatting in the street will always evoke the curiosity of the passers-by, who will turn their heads ten times to look at them."

"The idiots! What business is it of theirs to look at us? They deserve —"

"Come, don't be angry. Remember you are not the same young man you formerly were."

"You are right; but I still have great need of lessons in deportment — and tomorrow you leave for the country?"

"Yes, we are really going at last. Why it will

soon be July, and I should have been at my cottage long ago. By the way, who told you that I was going tomorrow?"

Jean reddened as he answered,—

"Why, it was my servant, who inquires sometimes in the neighborhood if you are preparing to go away."

Caroline smiled, and after a few moments said,—

"Yes, I am going tomorrow to Luzarche. It is about seven leagues from here. Are you acquainted with that neighborhood?"

"No, madame."

"It is very pretty, the outskirts are particularly charming, such agreeable walks, such delightful views. You like the country?"

"I have not been there for a long time, but I think that I could enjoy myself there — if a certain person — "

"If you are willing to sacrifice a little time to me, and if you think you would not be bored by staying with me — "

"Bored! By staying with you? Ah, that is impossible. When to see you for a moment alone suffices for the happiness of the whole day."

"Well, then, monsieur, you must come to Luzarche; besides, you could study as well there as in Paris. When visiting in the country, entire freedom is one of the first advantages."

"You will allow me, then, madame, to come and pay my respects to you there?"

"Yes, monsieur, and I hope that it will not be as in Paris and that you will be quite willing to cross the sill of my door."

"You are very kind, madame. I am more than fortunate to—"

"I really must leave you for this time. People will end by coming to the windows to look at us. Good-by, M. Durand."

"Good-by, madame."

Caroline smiled pleasantly at Jean, who bowed and remained standing where he was, that he might see her as long as possible. Caroline reached the door, she did not turn her head to look at Jean again, but perhaps she had a great desire to do so. At length she went in, and Jean, his heart intoxicated with joy, returned slowly to his apartment.

CHAPTER X

Vain Attempts

As we are aware, Jean at the time of his last meeting with Caroline had been living in the Rue Richer for nearly a year, having moved from his apartments in the Rue de Provence on the very day after that on which M. Chopard had invaded his apartments armed with a peace-offering of plums preserved in brandy.

Jean's object in making this change of residence, had been in the first place solely to avoid importunate visitors, because at that time he had resolved to set himself to studying and to try and make up for the time he had lost in his youth. But in going out to look for another domicile, Jean's steps had turned quite naturally toward the Rue Richer, there he had been fortunate enough to find the precious apartment from whence he could see the house occupied by Madame Dorville and from the windows of which he had enjoyed such delightful glimpses of that lady. One may imagine with what delight he had established himself and begun to realize the plan he had conceived. As impatient to obtain instruction as he had before been averse to any sort of occupation, Jean had engaged

a master of languages, a teacher of geography, history and literature, and a music master to come to his house. His time was shared equally between the three, and often, yielding to the new ardor which dominated him, Jean passed a part of the night in imbuing himself with what his professors had taught him during the day.

My readers will say that a year was a very short time in which to learn so many things; but when one has a firm will and nature has endowed one with the facility for acquiring knowledge one learns very much quicker at twenty-one than at ten; at the former age one can understand and reason as well as study, while children only learn by rote, like parrots.

But despite this fact as it is difficult during the short space of a year to properly learn many things, Jean was still far from being able as yet to speak any other language than his own; but at least he could express himself in good French. He could not discuss literature, but the names of the great authors and their works were no longer strange to him; he no longer mistook for a carnival the "Wedding of Thetis and Peleus"; and, while he was not yet capable of playing on the violin, he at least understood vocal music, the value of notes, and knew how to sing in time with the person who was accompanying him. He had applied himself particularly to the study of music because he often remembered the charming duet sung by

Madame Dorville at the grand party, and the tender things which a young man might address to her through music, for Jean promised himself that he would soon be able to sing to her himself.

On leaving his former dwelling, Jean had said that he was starting for Italy and that a friend had bought his furniture, and by this move he had evaded all undesired visitors. Bellequeue, who on leaving the Chopards' had gone to wrap his leg up in flannel in order that he might not have to meddle longer with the marriage of Mademoiselle Adelaide — Bellequeue's anger against Jean was soon dissipated, and yielding by degrees to the insinuations of his young maid he ended in confessing that he had spoken very harshly to his godson in their last interview.

"Well, now," said Rose, "you must make it up, for it would be very ridiculous that you should remain on bad terms with your godson, M. Jean, a young man whom you look upon as your own son, all for that Mademoiselle Chopard."

"That's true, Rose, that would be very disagreeable, but, as you see, he no longer comes to see me, this devil of a Jean!"

"Hang it, if you said such hard things to him, and were so disobliging to him, why do you think he should come? You can be very sarcastic when you put yourself to it."

"Yes, I confess that I am sometimes very overbearing —"

"You must go and see the young man yourself."

"But it seems to me, Rose, more suitable that he should make the first overture towards our reconciliation."

"And suppose he dare not? Why, between you, you will never come to any understanding. Mercy, if you like, I'll go to M. Jean's; at least that won't —"

"No, Rose, no," cried Bellequeue, bonneting himself with his Scotch cap, "I prefer to go myself most decidedly. That would be childish nonsense, and I can very well —"

"Why not let me go first to see him? that would be much better. Surely you are not afraid to let me go alone to M. Jean's? You do get such queer ideas into your head."

"No, it is not that; I know that you are a virtuous girl, better than anybody, but one must think of the proprieties before everything, my dear child."

Rose turned away smiling, and this smile expressed a good many things. Bellequeue, who feared that his little maid might persevere in the idea of going to pay a visit to his godson, decided to go immediately to find the latter. He had quite recovered from his attack of the gout, and was as light afoot as he had been at forty years of age, in fact, he felt almost able to walk on his tiptoes; he started, therefore, for the Rue de Provence.

This was about two months after the visit he had paid his godson, but Bellequeue felt a real sorrow when on arriving at the house in the Rue de Provence, the porter said to him,—

"M. Jean Durand left here two months ago, and at that time he was starting for Italy; I don't know if he has come back, but I cannot give you any address."

Bellequeue came away sadly, and on his return home said to Rose,—

"Jean has gone to Italy — gone without saying good-by to me. It is true that we were not on good terms, but he should have understood me better and known that my anger was that of the head and did not affect my heart."

"What! he has gone to Italy?" cried Rose; "That's very strange. Perhaps he has followed someone there, one of his friends."

"But who could that be, Rose?"

"Mercy, I don't know. But what if he has gone to Italy? he'll come back again, and I am very sure that as soon as he returns he'll come to see you, and that he won't remain angry with you."

However, Rose had her doubts as to the reality of this journey, and she greatly regretted that she had not obtained the pretty lady's address from Jean, because she presumed that through her she might have obtained some trace of the fugitive. Rose was a woman, she was shrewd, and in love affairs women's instincts are almost always true.

They had not remained idle at the Chopards' either. Mademoiselle Adelaide, after giving way to her anger so far as to break the flask of cognac, swearing that the unfaithful fellow should yet be her lover, seemed to have resumed her self-command, and she pretended for some time to think no more of the ungrateful man who had forgotten her. The papa and mamma were delighted to see their daughter return to a more reasonable frame of mind.

"She has too much strength of mind not to conquer her passion," said Madame Chopard, and her husband answered,—

"She's beginning to open her eyes as to Jean, who has conducted himself like a Jean — oh, I almost made a pun; but Adelaide doesn't take as much interest in putting up her fruits as she did, and I shall only believe her to be entirely cured of her love when I find her at the brandy or the spirits of wine."

In fact, the damsel's calm was only apparent. At the end of some weeks, Adelaide, taking her mamma's arm, led her to the Rue de Provence, where she pointed out Jean's dwelling and said to her mother,—

"Go in, I beg of you, and ask the porter to tell you what this young man is doing? what has become of him; how he conducts himself, in short — "

"What young man, my daughter?" said her mamma in surprise.

"What do you mean by asking me what young man?" cried Adelaide, loosing her mother's arm. "Aren't we in front of the house where that ungrateful, perfidious monster, who has played with my heart lives?"

"What, my daughter, are you still thinking of this Jean?"

"Am I still thinking of him? well, what next? Am I still thinking of him? — I do nothing else all day and all night long."

"I thought, my dearest, that you had returned to a more reasonable — in fact —"

"Oh, there is no question of that. I am more taken up with him now than ever. I am decided to turn Paris upside down to marry him."

"Why, my child!"

"Go and speak to the porter, mamma, I will wait for you here."

The kind mamma yielded to Adelaide's desires, and went to inquire of the porter, who informed her, as he had informed Bellequeue, that M. Durand had gone to Italy. Mamma returned to tell this news to her daughter.

"Gone to Italy!" cried Adelaide, with a gesture which sent her fist almost on to the nose of a little gentleman who was passing by, and who thought it very singular for a lady, for Adelaide did not look like a young girl, to gesticulate thus in the street. Adelaide resumed,—

"Gone to Italy? That may be a lie, perhaps.

Mother, go and ask the porter if that isn't a pretence, and give him fifteen sous to hide nothing from us."

Madame Chopard drew a fifteen-sous piece from her pocket and offered it to the porter, then she returned to say to her daughter,—

"My darling, it is quite true."

Adelaide walked angrily along for a few steps, then she exclaimed,—

"Mamma, didn't you ask when he was coming back?"

"Why, no, I didn't."

"Go back then and ask the man whether he's expected back soon."

Madame Chopard went back to the porter, and returned to Adelaide, saying,—

"The porter knows absolutely nothing about him."

"The porter's a big fool."

They started again and went a few steps further, then Adelaide cried,—

"I am going myself to speak to this porter, for his story is so impossible, he must have been deceiving you; and for fifteen sous he ought to have told you more than that. Wait for me here."

Adelaide left her mother in the street, and ran up to Jean's old dwelling; but despite her questions, her prayers, her entreaties, a hundred times repeated, she learned nothing further. At length she rejoined her mother, took her arm, and set

out for home with her, making a frightful face. Madame Chopard whispered to her husband when she went in,—

"Her love is rekindled stronger than ever."

"I was sure that it was not extinguished," answered M. Chopard, "she neglects her jars, and that is because she is thinking of something else."

"We must forgive her, it is very difficult to efface a first love from the memory."

"How do you know that, Madame Chopard? I don't think you can have had anything to efface since I have been your husband."

"Oh, M. Chopard, that is a question which grieves me."

"It is only a play on words, my dear."

Since Adelaide was over twenty years old, indeed she looked as if she were over twenty-five, and her parents considered her to be a strong-minded woman, entirely capable of looking after herself, they allowed her to go out alone in the morning, either to make purchases in the neighborhood or to attend to details for the household. The Chopards had too good an opinion of their daughter's virtue to fear that she would abuse the liberty which they allowed her.

Some days after her visit to the Rue de Provence with her mother, Adelaide returned there alone and asked the porter if there was any news of M. Jean. The porter made his customary answer and the strapping girl departed, only to return two

days later. She learned nothing further about him, but she was nothing daunted, and every two days the porter was greeted by this huge damsel, whose visits would have more than wearied him if Adelaide had not from time to time slipped a piece of silver into his hand to retain his good graces.

"Not even to say to what town in Italy he was going," cried Adelaide sometimes, "for at least one might have — Papa, is Italy very far distant?"

"Good heavens, is it very far?" answered M. Chopard, fearing that his daughter might take a desire to send him to Italy in search of Jean, "it's a lost country, that is to say, it is immensely far, it's on the other side of — all the mountains."

"Much farther than Rouen, where you took me once?"

"Oh, a hundred times further than there, and then the climate is horrible. One is stifling there all day, and there is nothing to eat except macaroni. As to robbers, they infest every highway. It is very rarely that one arrives there without having been despoiled five or six times by the way."

"All that doesn't frighten me in the least," said Adelaide, "but then one doesn't know which way to go — he must have followed his new flame there. Perhaps it was an Italian that he was in love with; those women are very coquettish, they employ every art to ensnare the men."

"They even use philtres," said M. Chopard.

"Then I am sure they must have made use of some such thing as that to entice M. Jean's heart away from me; for certainly he was too much in love with me to change naturally."

"Adelaide is right," said Madame Chopard, "they must have thrown a charm over the young man."

"A charm," muttered M. Chopard, who was looking for a pun, "certainly it was a charm—"

"Oh, if I could only discover that woman!" cried Adelaide. "Papa, is Italy very large?"

"Is Italy very large? What a question! A country which contains at the same time, Italians, Romans, and Latins, it is three times as large as China."

Adelaide sighed and was silent, for she would very much have liked to take a little journey to Italy.

Since the day on which he had gone to announce the rupture of the marriage, Bellequeue had not been to the Chopards'. Adelaide thought that the former hairdresser had conducted himself very badly in the whole matter, and her parents were entirely of her opinion.

"M. Bellequeue must certainly know M. Jean's new flame," said Adelaide, "or he would not have been the first to enlighten us as to the feelings of his godson."

"I think he has done very wrong," said Madame Chopard.

"To be sure," said M. Chopard, "he did enlighten us by telling us about the young man's new sweetheart."

"It is well for him that he doesn't put his foot in at this door."

"Oh, indeed, I should advise him not to come here," cried M. Chopard, "for if he did I should have to speak to him as I did to his godson."

And despite her almost daily visits to the porter in the Rue de Provence, Adelaide could learn nothing about Jean. Fully persuaded that Bellequeue must have news of his godson, and unable longer to resist the feelings which overpowered her, Adelaide decided one morning to go to Jean's godfather's. It was eleven o'clock and Bellequeue had left the house a few moments before she arrived. Rose heard some one ring violently.

"Oh, good heavens," said she, "hear that bell! That sounds like M. Jean's ring," and she ran to open the door; but in place of Jean she saw Mademoiselle Chopard, whom she knew very well, that damsel having sometimes accompanied her father in his visits to his friend.

"Is M. Bellequeue at home?" demanded Adelaide in a brusque tone, and with the unamiable expression which was habitual to her except when she deigned to make an effort to look pleasing.

"No, mademoiselle, he is not," answered the

little maid, immediately taking the tone of the person who was speaking to her.

"Oh, he is not in? What, has he gone out so soon as this?"

"He goes out when he pleases. It would hardly be amusing to him to remain at home for fear of not suiting some one; besides I am here, and the people who come here understand that it is all the same whether they speak to me or to monsieur."

Adelaide smiled ironically,—

"Oh, it is all the same, is it?"

Rose nodded slightly, saying to herself, "Saucy baggage, she is trying to embarrass me."

"Will he soon be back?" said Adelaide after a moment.

"I don't know anything about it," answered Rose dryly.

Adelaide was about to leave, but the little maid, who was very anxious to know the motive of her visit, thought better of it, and said to her,—

"Oh, monsieur cannot be long before he comes in, for now I remember he told me he was expecting his tailor towards this time."

"Then I'll wait for him," said Adelaide, going to sit down in the little drawing-room.

Rose followed her, dusting brush in hand, saying to herself, "You will gain nothing by waiting; monsieur has gone to the Natural History rooms, where he will spend a quarter of an hour in front of each bird."

Adelaide remained seated for some time without speaking, and Rose continued to arrange and dust the drawing-room, saying to herself,—

"Ah, you don't want to talk to me, I'll answer for it that I'll make you talk," and after a few moments, Rose said maliciously, with the air of being very much taken up with her work,—

"I believe that this is the young lady who should have been the wife of monsieur's godson."

"Oh, you know that," said Adelaide, smiling bitterly.

"I told mademoiselle that I know everything which interests M. Bellequeue, besides I have already had the honor of seeing Mademoiselle Chopard."

"Yes, in fact, I have been here with papa two or three times."

"Oh, with papa," said Rose to herself, turning away to laugh, "this little darling of five foot six inches who still says 'papa,' she ought to have a doll in her arms." Then Rose resumed,—

"It is very strange that that marriage was stopped like that, for they say it was quite a settled thing."

"Since you know all, you must be aware of M. Jean's unworthy conduct, towards — towards my parents; I don't speak of myself, for I got rid of him as if he were a Cossack."

"Yes, I'm likely to believe that," said Rose to herself.

"For his part," resumed Adelaide, "M. Bellequeue has not conducted himself towards us as one ought to expect an old friend would. Certainly when a person has the authority of a godfather, and over a young man who has neither father nor mother, he might surely make the young man marry whoever he wished."

"But hang it, mademoiselle, after all why should he do that? You surely don't want him to force M. Jean's inclinations, do you?"

"Force his inclinations! Well, that wouldn't have been the worst thing that could have happened to him; besides, it was me whom he loved."

"Ah, that is to say you thought it was."

"That is to say," cried Adelaide, rising, "I thought—you know M. Jean's secrets then? You know all his mind, you perhaps know the new object of his love; yes, I am sure that you know it. Speak, my maid, speak, speak, I tell you."

"Good Heavens! how warm you are getting about a man whom you have got rid of."

"Whether I get warm over it or whether I don't, that is my own business, and I beg you to speak."

"But it seems to me that you didn't come here to talk with the maid," answered Rose mockingly; "and since you only wish to speak to monsieur—"

"Ah, I see very well that you know all about it, mademoiselle. Yes, it was on the subject of M. Jean that I wished to see your master. As papa

is very angry with him, and as he has threatened that M. Jean should die by his hand, I wanted M. Bellequeue to tell me where the young man is, that I might advise him to avoid a meeting with papa, who would surely do him an injury."

"Oh, if it is only that, I don't think M. Jean is afraid of M. Chopard, hang it all! Besides, my master doesn't know where M. Jean is. As for this love which you thought he had for you, when you saw this young man become so pensive, so dreamy —"

"Oh, it really was love that made him become like that."

"But I can assure you very positively that you were not the cause of it."

"Make an end of it! Who was it that he did love then?" said Adelaide, twisting her handkerchief in her hands.

"Oh, a very pretty woman, or so he told me; oh, yes, a very fine lady, elegant, beautifully dressed."

"Oh, what scoundrels these men are. You were in his confidence then, my maid."

"Why, yes; M. Jean had so much confidence in me that he told me everything he thought."

"And where did he become acquainted with this lady?"

"It was one of those whom he rescued one evening from the attack of a robber."

"Oh, how horrible! one of those women whom

he found in the street — some unfortunate. And it was for such a creature as that, that he outraged me."

"She was not an unfortunate at all. It seems, on the contrary, that the lady is noble and a millionnaire, who has three carriages and a score of servants," and Rose turned away, saying to herself, "I had to say all that to vex her."

"She must be a princess then; a pretty princess,— who was walking about by herself in the evening in the Rue des Trois-Pavillons. Is she an Italian?"

"Oh, I don't know whether she is Italian or Turkish. M. Jean didn't tell me that, but one thing about it is certain, and that is he loves her. Ah, but he does love her dearly."

"Even if he should love her like a Samson, I'll answer for it that he don't marry her."

"Why, what will prevent him from doing so?"

"Me."

"What, you?"

"Yes, my maid, me."

"Perhaps he's already married her, only he did not tell me about it."

"What is the name of this beauty?"

"I don't know anything about that."

"You don't know anything about it?"

"No, M. Jean didn't tell me."

"That's very strange, and where does she live?"

"I don't know that either."

"You don't know where she lives, M. Jean's confidant?"

"No, mademoiselle, I do not know, or if I do know, I shan't tell you. I am not going to betray the secrets of love"—and Rose said to herself, "I must make her believe that I do know the address."

"Mademoiselle Rose, I beg of you to tell me the address of this lady," cried Adelaide, with flashing eyes.

"Mademoiselle, I shall not tell you," answered Rose, beginning her dusting again.

"Take care, my maid. I shall see M. Bellequeue some other time, and I shall complain to him about you. I will have your master send you away if you don't give me that address."

"You will have him send me away," cried Rose, throwing a cloud of dust from her dusting-brush over Adelaide. "Oh, well, that's very pretty, that is. But the worst of it is my master will listen to me before he listens to you, and he will very likely beg you to stay quietly at home with your papa, and not come here to make your lamentations because you haven't got a husband."

The last words put the finishing stroke to Adelaide's anger, and she cried,—

"I shan't compromise myself further with a servant," and she went out, making the floor tremble under her steps.

Mademoiselle Chopard's visit to Bellequeue had

no other result. The year passed without her having obtained any further news of M. Jean, who was tranquilly studying in his little apartment on the Rue Richer, while Bellequeue was uneasy about him, while Rose was astonished that he did not come to see them, and while Adelaide was running every morning to the porter of the Rue de Provence.

CHAPTER XI

A Sojourn at Luzarche

Whatever his faults, M. Jean was not slow to profit by Madame Dorville's invitation, for intense as was his desire to study, it was quite subservient to his desire to be near Caroline; besides, he was clever enough by this time to realize that when one is repairing his lack of education in the hope of pleasing an amiable and witty woman, it is always from her that one gets the best lessons, the most inspiration; the heart is, after all, the best teacher.

The schoolmasters imbue us with knowledge, the women teach us how to please; we leave the hands of the first quite proud of being able to show our erudition, and learn from the second how to hide the dry husks of knowledge under the more gracious form of gallantry, to love the pretty nothings, which are of value only because they issue from a charming mouth, much better than the dry formulas of science. In the company of women we men fortunately acquire the art of listening, and that in society is what makes one sought after.

Jean, who now understood the convenances,

allowed Madame Dorville time to arrive and establish herself in her country house; but after the lapse of six days he started for Luzarche, mounted on a pretty horse, which he had just bought, and followed by his servant.

The seven leagues were traversed in less than three hours, and then, as Jean approached Caroline's neighborhood, he lessened his horse's speed; when we are about to reach the object of all our desires it seems as though a secret voice forbids us to hasten the moment of happiness; for hope in itself makes us already happy enough.

Jean had not asked Madame Dorville in what part of Luzarche her house was situated, but he was persuaded that he should know her place by instinct, and seeing a pretty villa, which was elegantly appointed and kept up, he cried,—

"There it is!" and he alighted from his horse, knocked and inquired for Madame Dorville. A young girl answered his summons and said in response to it,—

"Madame Dorville's house is farther on, monsieur, at the end of the second turning to the left."

Jean thanked her and remounted his horse, greatly astonished that his heart could have thus deceived him; but if the heart were always a sorcerer it would expose one to a great many disagreeable experiences.

At length he perceived the much-desired house; it was at least as handsome and well kept as the

one at which he had first applied, but its simplicity evinced the good taste of its owner. In front was a court enclosed by iron railings; this court was adorned with small shrubs and surrounded by a trellis covered with honeysuckle. The house itself was handsome and commodious, having a ground-floor, two stories above and attics, and a fine vestibule in the middle, of which the door at the back was open, allowing a glimpse of a delightful garden.

Jean had not noticed all these things, for he had seen a lady at a window on the first floor. He had immediately put his horse to a gallop, for this lady was Caroline, who, by a fortunate chance no doubt, was looking down the lane which led to the highway. Presently the young traveller drew near, and Caroline thought that Jean sat his horse very well.

She came down to welcome the arriving guest. Jean reddened as he approached her and stammered,—

"You see, madame, that I am profiting by your invitation."

"That's very kind of you," answered the lady, "I didn't tell you whereabouts I lived, and I was afraid you would not find me. Are you not very tired?"

"By no means," responded Jean, "I have had a most delightful ride."

"Then I am going to take you all over my

domains on a tour of admiration; one must resign one's self to that when one visits country friends. I shan't allow you to miss even a rose-bush, but first I must present you to the persons who are kind enough to keep me company here."

Jean followed Caroline into a drawing-room on the groundfloor, where was seated an old lady of venerable appearance, reading the paper, and at a little distance seated at a piano a little girl of twelve or thirteen years of age. The old lady, Madame Marcelin, had been a friend of Caroline's mother; her means were narrow and Caroline profited by her sojourn in the country by inviting Madame Marcelin to keep her company, an invitation which the good lady had accepted with great pleasure. The little girl, Laure, was the daughter of honest people whose present means did not allow them to cultivate their daughter's talents; so Caroline had brought Laure to Luzarche and there took pleasure in giving her lessons in music, for which the little girl evinced the greatest aptitude.

Thanks to this company, Madame Dorville could receive at her country-house whomsoever she pleased without giving rise to unpleasant remarks, which she would not have dared to do had she been living alone.

Jean bowed to the old lady, who had put down the paper and taken off her glasses as he entered the room. Little Laure bowed also, then went on with her music.

"These," said Caroline to Jean, "are my faithful companions in this cottage. Whenever you like to join our party it will give me great pleasure. Although I have not a château, still I can lodge such of my friends as are willing to give me a few days. For the rest, there is entire freedom here, each one works or reads or walks, does entirely as he wishes. At meal times only is one expected to be prompt. In short, our guests stay with us if it pleases them; and as ladies' prattle is not always amusing to gentlemen, why, then they wish us good-by and go back home again."

Jean was delighted at Caroline's kindly reception; he would, it is true, have preferred her to be alone in her cottage, but to be near her was still much, and Madame Dorville had invited him to give her some days, a happiness for which he had not dared to hope.

"Come and see my domains," said Caroline taking his hand. And he allowed himself to be led, greatly moved at holding Caroline's pretty hand in his and delighted that the manners of good society permitted this sweet familiarity.

They went over the garden, which was very large. They visited a little grove of hazel trees, a grotto, a pavilion, a field. As they came back Caroline showed him her dairy and even her dovecote, exclaiming,—

"I told you that I would excuse you from nothing!"

Jean thought it all admirable, although he did not always pay attention to what she showed him, finding the sight of his pretty hostess infinitely preferable to any of her possessions, and thinking that to live near her would render study very easy to him. Caroline led her guest to a small room where there were several shelves plenished with books and portfolios of drawings.

"This is where we come to work, to study or to read," said the young widow smiling. "As I sometimes live in the country for five months of the year, I like to find here my favorite authors. There are not more than a hundred books, it is true; but as they are well chosen, one must necessarily learn many things from them. This is also a 'school of design,' for here I give Laure her drawing-lesson every day. Now, monsieur, you are of the household, and when you are friendly enough to come and stay with us, you can work as much as you like in this room, which I have dignified with the pretentious name of the library."

"Oh, I shall come here often if you will allow me, madame, and if my presence is not troublesome to you," said Jean looking full at Caroline.

The latter turned her eyes from his as she answered,—

"If your presence were troublesome to me should I have wanted you to come and see me?"

"Why, in society, they say people go to see each other without feeling the least friendship."

"Here, we are not in society. In Paris I sometimes receive visits which I would willingly escape; but such persons as those I never invite to come and study here."

"I deem myself fortunate in being among those whom you are graciously pleased to admit to your intimacy. What have I done to deserve such happiness?"

"Your frankness has always predisposed me in your favor. There are so few sincere people in the world! However, your rather free tone, your common expressions were distasteful to me, I was sorry for you — pardon me! perhaps I displease you?"

"Far from that, madame, can I receive anything but the best of lessons from you? Is it not to you that I owe —"

At this moment a bell was heard.

"It is dinner time," cried Caroline, "there is the bell, oh, I have everything done here as in a château. Come, monsieur, we must not make them wait."

Jean followed his young hostess, the old lady and little Laure were already in the dining-room. They seated themselves at the table. At first Jean felt rather embarrassed, but Caroline's amiability and gayety soon made him lose the restraint which prevented him from being himself. Little by little he entirely regained his ease, expressed himself with greater facility, dared to say what he thought, because he was convinced that no one there would

make game of him ; for the first time in Caroline's presence he was gay, pleasing and witty ; however, Caroline did not appear at all surprised — she had divined that he could be all that.

After dinner they went to walk in the garden ; Jean was quite surprised at being already on the terms of old acquaintance with Caroline. However, he did not allow himself the slightest liberty, the slightest familiarity beyond those which the strictest formalities of custom permitted. But his amiability, his frankness, his enjoyment had an abandon of which he was unconscious, and he was quite surprised to see that in society one may be very pleasing without infringing any of the rules it imposes.

" Music bores you, does it not? You don't like it, I believe? "

" Pardon me," answered Jean, " I like it very much now, and I am even beginning to sing a little myself."

" What, monsieur, you are learning music also? Oh, we'll see directly what talent you have ! I'll accompany you. We have plenty of songs here."

Caroline sat down to the piano and Jean took his place behind her, he chose a piece which he knew and he sang, tremblingly at first, then much better and with great expression, because, being placed behind Caroline, her glance did not disturb him. But behind the piano was a mirror, in which Jean could see the features of his accompanist and

her beautiful eyes which were fixed on him. Then he lost himself, and he got mixed up in his song and could not recover himself.

"Well, what are you stopping for," said Caroline, "when you were singing that so well. Come, monsieur, go on. Remember that here you must work."

M. Jean finished the piece, Caroline exclaiming every moment: "It's astonishing—in so short a time to have learned to sing so well, in such good time, with so much expression."

And the pretty woman turned and looked at the young man; there was in this look something that paid Jean for all he had done throughout the year.

"I also know some duets," said Jean, who was already losing his timidity at singing.

"Some duets? Which ones do you know?"

"Why, in the first place the one you sang at that big party where I met you again."

"Oh, I remember, the duet from 'Les Aubergistes de Qualité.' Here it is; we will try it together." Jean felt much moved on hearing Caroline's beautiful voice and hardly dared blend his accents with hers; but she encouraged him, she scolded him, she went over it again when he did badly; finally, she pretended not to notice the expression of his eyes, and the trembling of his voice when he spoke of love.

"We shall make something of you yet," said

Caroline; "Laure sings well, she shall give you some lessons. It would really be a pity not to make you a good musician."

Jean made a sign of assent, he could not give utterance as yet to all he would have liked to say, or perhaps he thought that he should not yet say all that he thought.

But old Madame Marcelin had already closed her book and taken her light to go to bed. Jean did not yet know positively if he ought to stay, even though he had been asked for some days. In his incertitude he took his hat and looked at Caroline with embarrassment.

"Well now, monsieur, what are you going to do?" said the young woman, going towards him. "Surely you are not going to leave us?"

"Why, madame, I don't know—"

"Why, no, monsieur, you will stay with us for some days—at least, unless business prevents you."

"Pardon, madame, I am entirely free. But I was fearful—I did not know if I ought—"

Caroline smiled again, then she rang for her chambermaid. Louise appeared and was ordered to conduct Jean to one of the guest chambers.

Jean bowed low to the company and followed the servant, who led him to a pretty room on the second story, where she left him, and Jean went to bed stupefied with happiness, and the thought that he was sleeping under the same roof as Caroline,

that he was her guest, that he might remain there for several days, effectually prevented him from sleeping. But one cannot have all the good things at once; besides, is it good to sleep when our ideas are rose-colored?

When one has not slept all night, it is natural for him to rise early. At daybreak Jean was up and about; his first act was to order his servant to his apartment in Paris, for he did not see the necessity of keeping him with him at Madame Dorville's. Later Jean went into the gardens and delightedly roamed about the walks, the shrubberies, the shady places, which were every day embellished by Caroline's presence. It seemed to Jean that the air was sweeter, that nature itself showed new beauty wherever the charming woman had set her foot. Who among us has not known this influence caused by the beloved object, the magic glamour with which the boy god surrounds all lovers. And yet there are some people who dare to say that there are no longer any sorcerers or hobgoblins when a child can transform a cottage for us into a most delightful boudoir, a gloomy wood or a dark cavern into an enchanted spot, and what are necessary to him for that? A pair of beautiful eyes, a tiny foot — a little turned-up nose. Circe and Medea did not know more than this child.

Jean, absorbed in his thoughts, had paused before a group of trees near which was a verdurous slope.

He was looking at this bank attentively, or perhaps he did not see it, for lovers resemble myopical people; their thoughts are often very far from that which they seem to examine. Suddenly a well-known voice broke on the young man's ear, saying,—

"At what are you looking so attentively?"

"I was looking at that grassy bank."

"That grassy bank? Why, I don't see anything extraordinary in that."

"I was thinking that more than once you, undoubtedly, had sat there."

Jean said nothing more; but Caroline was moved at this simple, this naïve confession, which conveyed more than compliments artfully contrived and spoken pretentiously. For several moments she remained thoughtful, and Jean did not ask her the reason.

But little Laure came running to say that breakfast was ready. Caroline had already resumed her cheerfulness and they returned to the house. After breakfast, Madame Marcelin turned with delight to the papers, the reading of which occupied the greater part of her day. Caroline and Laure went up to the library and Jean followed them. He read while the ladies were drawing, but from time to time his eyes were not on his book, but bent on his amiable hostess and, by chance, no doubt, Caroline's glances often met Jean's. Then she would say to him, smiling,—

"Well, now, monsieur, why don't you read?"

"Pardon me, madame, but I was meditating on what I had read."

"Oh, it's well to do that, monsieur."

Jean was lying then, but when one is learning the customs of society they must necessarily learn to lie.

When Caroline and her pupil had finished their drawing-lesson, they left Jean in the library, and not till then did he really study and understand what he was reading. At length he went down to the drawing-room and little Laure gave him a lesson in solfeggio. After dinner they walked in the garden or in the neighborhood, and in the evening they came in and again had some music.

Several days passed thus. Jean was too happy to risk anything further; however, he loved Caroline, but he feared to confess his love lest she should be displeased and allow him no longer to be near her. This fear rendered him mute; but if his lips did not utter the secret of his heart, his eyes ought to have made it known. When by chance Jean found himself alone with Caroline, his look sought hers and he always saw there a kindly expression, but perhaps it was only one of friendship. Caroline was good, pleasant, but would she ever feel love for him? Jean believed himself unworthy to possess her heart, he still regarded himself as he was of old.

A week passed rapidly; Jean feared he should

commit an indiscretion in staying longer on his first visit, and accordingly on the next morning he took his leave.

"You are going to leave us!" said Caroline to him; and her voice seemed still sweeter; the expression of reproach with which she accompanied these words delighted Jean, who was ready to tell her he would stay. However, he recalled his resolution and said that business called him to Paris.

"If you are long away," said little Laure, "you will forget all that you have learned."

"You hear," said Caroline, "your music mistress wishes you to return soon."

The pretty woman did not say more, but her looks seemed to accord with Laure's desires. Jean took Caroline's hand timidly and pressed it in his own, he dared not carry it to his lips. There were still so many things that he dared not do, although formerly he was bold, enterprising; but extremes meet and this was not the Jean of former times.

He tore himself at last from this enchanted neighborhood, and said to himself as he returned to Paris: "I could not remain there longer this time for propriety's sake; but when I go back there, I shall stay until she herself tells me to leave."

CHAPTER XII

Visits. A Duel and its Results

Very solitary did Jean find his little apartment, and very heavily did time hang on his hands, for Madame Dorville was no longer near him. He had to content himself with the remembrance of her beautiful face, for he necessarily could not hope even to see her pass in the street. Therefore, the days seemed excessively long; even study afforded no distraction, for he could not fix his thought upon his work, his mind was wandering in sunnier scenes, and after a week which seemed to him eternal, Jean could contain himself there no longer, so he departed for Madame Dorville's country house.

"Should she be displeased at seeing me—should she receive me coldly," he said, "why then I shall confess to her that I cannot live away from her, and if this confession displease, should she not reciprocate my feeling, I will beg her to allow me to breathe the air that she breathes, to stay beneath the roof that shelters her and I will never more mention my love."

But a secret consciousness told him that Caroline would find no fault with his haste in returning

to see her. Yielding to this hope, he pressed his horse's flanks, and reached Luzarche covered with foam.

Jean alighted from his horse, and gave it into the care of the gardener who served also as hostler, asking him if Madame Dorville was at home.

"I saw madame just now go down into the garden," answered the gardener. Jean, delighted, slipped a piece of gold into the servant's hand, and went straight to the garden, of which he knew every turn. He had already passed through a part of it without seeing Caroline, when finally, at the end of the path, he saw the young woman seated on the grassy bank where she had surprised him some days previously.

Jean paused; Caroline could not see him, and he softly bent forward to learn how she was employed. But she held neither work nor book nor drawing. Her head was supported on one of her hands, her eyes were fixed on the grass, her bosom softly rose and fell; she was entirely absorbed in her reflections.

Jean did not stir, but he smiled as he said to himself, "Of what, or of whom is she thinking?"

Some moments had passed thus, when, rousing from her revery, Caroline turned her head suddenly, and saw Jean motionless, a few steps from her.

"What! is that you? are you here?" asked Caroline, in surprise.

"Yes, madame, I've just arrived. They told me you were in the garden, and I came to look for you."

"And you remained there without saying anything to me?"

"I saw you. Was not that enough?"

"Really, M. Jean, I think that you are acquiring the tone of society in too great a degree, for you also pay compliments."

"I pay compliments? No, madame, I shall never do that. I wish to preserve my former sincerity, since that was my only good quality!"

"Heavens, how warm you are! You are all in a perspiration."

"I rode rather fast."

"Well, you may as well sit down, at least."

Jean did not allow her to repeat this invitation. He seated himself beside Caroline, who resumed, looking at him attentively,—

"What folly to fatigue yourself thus. Why did you hurry so?"

"That I might see you the sooner."

"Paris has not made you forget the country?"

"On the contrary, I have been so happy here with you that in Paris I felt that existence was not worth having. I could not resist the impulse to return to you, though this desire has perhaps caused me to infringe the proprieties."

"I've already told you, M. Jean, that between friends one may dispense with ceremony. Do you not wish to be my friend?"

"Your friend? The title is very sweet. However — there is a sweeter one."

A sigh accompanied these words. Caroline pretended not to hear either words or sigh, and laughingly exclaimed,—

"Gracious, how serious we are! You seem as though you have some great occasion for sadness, but I hope there is nothing of that kind. Come, monsieur, I won't have you look so pensive as that."

"You must teach me to be cheerful, madame," answered Jean, sighing again, and Caroline looked at him, smilingly; Jean's eyes met hers, and so tender was their expression that she could not help blushing and sighing also.

At this moment, little Laure came running to announce to her good friend that some neighbors had called. Caroline rose, saying to Jean,—

"Let us go into the drawing-room, I must welcome these people."

Jean followed her into the house, heartily wishing these tiresome people had stayed at home.

The visitors were a husband, his wife, and four children, who called themselves neighbors of Madame Dorville because they had a temporary lodging at Chantilly, where they never stayed, passing the fine season in visiting the residents in the neighborhood. They came unceremoniously, and installed themselves first with one and then with another. Caroline, who often met them in Paris,

was obliged to accord a welcome to this very troublesome family, of which the head was an insupportable gossip, the wife a pretentious fool, and the four little boys four little devils, who turned everything upside down, while their mother incessantly repeated,—

"My boys may be allowed to go everywhere freely; they are too well brought up to touch anything."

While Caroline was receiving the Deschamps family, Jean went to greet Madame Marcelin and little Laure, then, unable to get a single word with Caroline, he went into the library. But there M. Deschamps took possession of him and began a conversation, or rather a monologue, on the pleasures of the country without leaving his interlocutor the chance of saying anything except yes or no. Tired by this chatter, Jean beat a retreat to the garden; but M. Deschamps followed him there, and every tree, every bush, every flower furnished him with the means of prolonging his reflections on the pleasures of the country. Poor Jean could see no means of getting away from him, but Caroline, who had noticed that he had been victimized by M. Deschamps, decided to go to the rescue. So she told him that Laure was awaiting him, that they might have some music. Jean thanked Caroline with a glance, and left her with this gentleman, who was so eloquent on the pleasures of country life.

Jean flattered himself that the Deschamps would leave after dinner. But, at dessert, the head of the family said to Caroline,—

"Madame Dorville, we came without ceremony to pass a week with you. Later we are going to Ecouen, to M. de Granfort's, where we shall remain for a fortnight; from there we go to Pierrefitte, to Madame Duparc's. Then we shall pass three weeks at Beaumont, and a month at Louvre. They expect us everywhere. We are engaged for the whole summer. You must come and see us also at Chantilly, Madame Dorville. We shall be delighted to see you."

Before inviting people to visit at his house, M. Deschamps was careful to let them know that he was never there. Jean looked at Caroline, and his eyes seemed to say to her,—

"What! You are going to keep these people with you for a whole week?"

A slight smile which appeared on the pretty woman's lips made Jean understand that she had divined his thoughts. However, she answered very politely,—

"It is very amiable of you to come and see me. Some days later you would not have found me, for they are expecting me at a country neighbor's, I have promised to be there in three or four days."

"Then we can only stay with you till then," resumed M. Deschamps, "and we shall pass three days longer with M. de Granfort."

"These will be four very amusing days," said Jean. In fact, while the Deschamps family was with Caroline it was impossible to have a moment's peace without leaving the house. In the morning, M. Deschamps pursued everybody, even into the library, and there was no way of escaping him. In the garden, the children pillaged everything; they picked fruits and flowers, and were even pleased to pull up some little trees to plant them elsewhere. And in the evening papa's voice, mingling with the shouts of his four boys, did not allow what they were singing at the piano to be heard.

Finally, on the fourth day, the Deschamps family took their leave, M. Deschamps remarking, "We are leaving for Ecouen," and then inviting Madame Dorville to come and visit them at Chantilly.

They breathed more freely when rid of the presence of these tiresome people. After the departure of the Deschamps, the members of Caroline's household resumed the occupations which they loved. They were themselves again, and resumed their charmingly easy intercourse. Jean, whose desire to deserve the esteem of this charming woman had become even more accentuated, made rapid progress in music, and passed several hours every morning in the library, a look, a word from Caroline amply repaying his assiduity. To be near her was in itself a sweet recompense, and then, even

though they said nothing, when each seemed given up to his or her thoughts, Jean found that the time flew. The hours always pass so rapidly when we are near those we love.

But ten days after the Deschamps family's departure, a pretty cabriolet stopped before the door of Madame Dorville's house, and presently Madame Beaumont and M. Valcourt presented themselves.

For a long time Valcourt had greatly wished to pay a visit to the young widow's country house; he had often begged Madame de Beaumont to conduct him thither, and the latter had at length consented to do so.

The ladies were in the drawing-rooms on the groundfloor when the newcomers arrived. Caroline received them with her habitual grace; and M. Valcourt asked pardon for the liberty he had taken in accompanying Madame Beaumont, without awaiting the formality of an invitation. She excused him politely, and hastened to do the honors of her house.

Valcourt looked at everything, admired everything, and while he was saying to himself, "This is a delightful and enchanting place, I should like to pass my life here," Madame Beaumont informed Caroline that she had come to stay with her for some days.

"That is extremely kind of you," answered Caroline smiling; but then the smile was not very

natural, and a close observer would have seen that it was forced for politeness' sake.

Jean was working in the library while Madame Beaumont and Valcourt were being installed in the house, but little Laure went up and said to him,—

"We have some more visitors who have just arrived, some people from Paris. It's so annoying, one can't sing half so well when there are so many people."

Jean also thought it very annoying, but not merely because it would prevent them from singing. It was, however, necessary for him to take it in good part, and this gentleman and lady could not be as tiresome as were the Deschamps. Jean changed his clothes carefully before going down to the drawing-room, where he presented himself with a graceful ease which he was daily acquiring from his intercourse with Caroline. Madame Beaumont looked at Jean, for his bearing, his manners, were so different from those of former times that at first she did not remember him. Valcourt immediately recognized the young man at whom he had laughed so much, and his features expressed the surprise and envy he experienced in finding him at Madame Dorville's. Jean bowed politely, then he went to talk with Madame Marcelin, while Madame Beaumont said in a whisper to Caroline,—

"My dearest, who is this gentleman, it seems to me that I have seen him somewhere before?"

"That's M. Durand."

"What, the one who was such bad form?"

"Yes, my dearest."

"Why, he doesn't seem to me to be the same."

"No, the truth is he is entirely changed. You see, my dear friend, that one may now receive him without compromising one's self."

These words were accompanied by rather an ironical smile. While these ladies were talking between themselves, Valcourt continued to scrutinize Jean, and was much vexed that he could find nothing to criticise in the style or cut of his clothing.

The bell for dinner sounded. Jean offered his arm to Madame Beaumont, and they seated themselves at the table, where at first they spoke little, each one seeming to watch the other; but Madame Beaumont soon began to tell the news from Paris, and Valcourt, who thought that Jean would be unequal to the conversation, tried to make him talk; but to the great astonishment of the young dandy, Jean answered very well, and if he did not employ paraphrases and metaphors, if he did not affectedly use out of the way words, he understood perfectly well how to hold his own.

Valcourt bit his lips with anger, his eyes were first on Jean, then on Caroline, and he managed to let slip several malicious observations, which did not escape the young widow, but to which Jean paid not the slightest attention. Dinner being over, they repaired to the garden. Valcourt did not for an instant leave Caroline's side, doing the amiable

with gallantry; although his gayety appeared a little forced, it was nevertheless vexatious to Jean, who took himself off sighing, and went to walk in a solitary path, saying to himself, "I would much rather have had the Deschamps family."

Night drew everybody into the drawing-room. As they went in, Caroline said in a low voice to Jean,—

"Why didn't you stay with us in the garden?"

"I was fearful of being importunate."

"That was very wrong, monsieur. Hereafter, I beg you to remain with me also."

These words made Jean feel happy again, and Valcourt, who saw him smile, made a horrible grimace, then he went and seated himself at the piano. They invited Valcourt to sing, and after being pressed for a long time, he at length consented, and warbled a couple of ditties, then he entreated Caroline to sing a nocturne with him. She accepted, and Valcourt seemed to triumph in mingling his voice with Madame Dorville's. Jean said nothing; he was seated in a corner listening, but after the nocturne, Caroline begged him to sing a duet with her. Jean did not allow her to repeat the invitation, and Valcourt threw himself into an armchair muttering, "Now we shall see how he sings." To the great regret of the presumptuous young man, Jean sang very well. If he did not execute trills and roulades, he sang with taste and expression, which is much better.

"That's really very good," said Madame Beaumont, "monsieur has a very pretty voice."

"Has he not, my dearest," said Caroline.

"It would have been a pity had M. Durand not taken singing lessons, we should have lost much," cried Valcourt ironically. "Monsieur must have made good use of his time, for I remember he told me not very long ago that music made him feel stupid."

Caroline was vexed at Valcourt's observation, but Jean contented himself with answering,—

"The fact is, monsieur, I have, in a short time, learned many things, for I wished to deserve madame's kindness, and to conduct myself in her house in such a manner as to prevent her regretting that she has received me there."

Valcourt bit his lips and said nothing. Caroline hastened to talk of the country, flowers, gardening, but the conversation languished, and every one retired early, Valcourt kissing Madame Dorville's hand, and Jean throwing her a look, which Caroline answered in kind.

The next day, very early in the morning, Jean was in the garden hoping to meet Caroline there alone for a moment, but Valcourt had risen as early as he, and was walking about the paths, admiring the flowers, the aviary, and when Caroline came down into the garden he reached her side first. The pretty woman, who perceived Jean, directed her steps toward him, but Valcourt did

not leave her for a moment, he overwhelmed her with compliments, inanities; Caroline laughed, and Jean was silent.

Breakfast reassembled the company; Caroline was amiable to everybody, Jean was pensive, and Valcourt had resumed his tone of persiflage; persuaded that Jean spoke little because he feared to commit some blunder, the fatuous young man opened every subject of conversation, he spoke of literature, politics, fashions, paintings and smiled mockingly when he saw that Jean took no part in the conversation.

"I am going to read in the garden," said Madame Beaumont.

"After breakfast, I am going to walk about the neighborhood," said Valcourt.

"And I am going to study in the library."

"To study?" resumed Valcourt, mockingly.

"Yes, monsieur, to study."

"Are you by chance learning to dance the English?"

This question recalled to Jean his adventure at the party and his face became scarlet, anger shone in his eyes, but Caroline looked at him and he restrained himself; Valcourt, delighted at what he deemed his mystification, resumed jeeringly,—

"Somebody told me that you were not very fortunate in that dance, and since you desire to acquire so many things it would not cost you much to learn to dance."

Jean answered nothing, he went out of the room, bowing coldly to the ladies.

Caroline immediately took Laure's arm, but Valcourt stopped her and asked smilingly if she were also going to engage in study.

"I am at home," she answered, "and am not, I believe, accountable to you. I beg of you not to forget that."

These words and the tone in which she pronounced them proved to Valcourt that she was wounded at what he had said to Jean. The young dandy, being left alone, returned to the garden, saying to himself, "Can it be that Madame Dorville prefers that Durand to me? Come, that's impossible. Madame Dorville's taste is too good. That big booby may be very studious, but he will never have good form, and that's all there is about it, ha, ha! he was very much put out when I spoke about the English, he went off without finding a word to answer me."

At this moment Valcourt raised his eyes and saw Jean, who was coming straight to him.

"Monsieur," said Jean very calmly, "I was awaiting an occasion of finding you alone to have a little explanation with you."

"What about?" said Valcourt in an impertinent tone, although he began to believe that Jean had found some answer for him.

"Monsieur, in advising me to learn to dance the English, was it your intention to insult me?"

"My faith, take it as you like! Do you suppose that I am going to account to you as to what I intend or do not intend? That's a great joke."

"I do not know whether it be a joke, monsieur; but it is with astonishment that I see a man who prides himself on his good form conducting himself as you have done. Had I not been restrained by the presence of the ladies, I should not have waited till now to answer you."

"Oh, indeed, monsieur, do you intend to give me lessons, by chance?"

"Exactly so, monsieur, I wish to give you a lesson in good breeding."

"You are insolent."

"No impertinence, monsieur, and above all, no noise; or you will make me believe that before you dare to fight you must lose your head. I think, besides, it is incumbent on us to hide this matter from Madame Dorville, and that it would be improper to finish it near her residence. I shall start for Paris tomorrow morning at five o'clock, and I hope to meet you at the Barrière de l'Etoile."

"Yes, monsieur, I will be there."

Jean bowed to Valcourt, and went to beg the gardener to saddle his horse, returned to the room he had been occupying and came down, reflecting whether he should leave without saying good-by to Madame Dorville. But in crossing the vestibule, Jean met Caroline, who was coming towards him.

"Where are you going? I see that Pierre is getting your horse ready."

"I am going to Paris."

"You are going! Why are you leaving so suddenly? Is it M. Valcourt's presence that causes you to abandon us thus? Ah, you cannot think that I prefer his society to yours. If he had said things to you this morning which displeased you, please pay no attention to it, I beg of you. Ah, my friend, there are so many people in the world to whom one regrets being obliged to listen."

Caroline had never spoken to Jean so tenderly, so affectionately before. This was the first time she had called him her friend, and this word from her mouth had so much influence that Jean, moved, transported with pleasure, was for a moment undecided, and hardly knew what he ought to do; but the rendezvous was given, and to miss it would be cowardly. He said to her, after a moment,—

"I remembered that I had some business which I must absolutely attend to this evening at Paris, but I will come back soon, I hope; tomorrow, perhaps. Ah, madame, need I tell you that I am happy only when near you?"

Caroline extended her hand to Jean, saying,—

"Go, then, and come back as soon as possible."

Jean took the charming hand which she abandoned to him, and for the first time covered it with kisses, then summoning up all his courage, he mounted his horse and departed from Luzarche.

Caroline returned sadly to the drawing-room, where she chatted for some time with the ladies. Soon Valcourt joined the ladies, still doing the amiable, and trying to appear lively. However, he was less cheerful than in the morning.

At dinner Madame Beaumont asked what had become of M. Durand.

"He has left us," answered Caroline "he had some business in Paris."

No one asked anything further of him, but in the evening, after taking a few turns in the garden, Valcourt announced that he was about to return to Paris.

"What," said Madame Beaumont, "you are going to leave us already?"

"Yes, fair lady, I have business in Paris, but I hope to come here constantly to see you, ladies."

"You will not find me here, monsieur," said Caroline, "so do not take the trouble to come again."

These words were a formal dismissal. Valcourt felt it; he was furious, and left saying, "Good-by then, madame, but if you expect M. Jean shortly, I fear you will be disappointed in your desires."

"What does M. Valcourt mean?" cried Caroline, as soon as the young dandy had gone. "Why this bantering tone on leaving me?"

"Why, my dearest," said Madame Beaumont, "Valcourt is very subject to ill-temper, and the manner in which you spoke to him—"

"And how has M. Valcourt conducted himself since he has been in my house, madame. He bantered, he offended even, a person against whom he had no complaint. Tell me whether he or M. Durand behaved best this morning? But this sudden departure of both of them, those words which escaped from Valcourt — O my God, what a frightful thought! if they are going to —?"

"Come, my dear, you don't think they are going to fight a duel, do you, for a little joke about a dance?"

"M. Valcourt's tone was such that no one would submit to such a joke."

"You know very well that M. Durand said nothing to him in response."

"No, not before us —"

"Come, come, such an idea is nonsensical."

Caroline was sad all the evening. They separated very early, and the next morning, Madame Beaumont, displeased at what had transpired between Caroline and her protégé, said good-by to Madame Dorville and returned to Paris.

Caroline passed the day in the greatest agitation, going every few minutes to one of the windows which looked on the highway, she forgot music, drawing, all her usual occupations. Good Madame Marcelin, surprised at her sadness, asked her if she were indisposed, and little Laure did all she could to make her smile again.

"Nothing is the matter with me, absolutely

nothing," answered Caroline, but the tone in which she pronounced these words did not satisfy those who were with her. At night, the sadness, the uneasiness of Caroline was augmented; for Jean had not returned and had sent no news of himself. The young woman retired to her room early, and her faithful maid followed her there. She had noticed the change in her mistress' manner, and Louise, though very simple, had partly divined the cause. The most simple girls have tact in certain things, and Louise, who wanted to make her mistress talk, said to her while undressing her,—

"Goodness, how suddenly M. Durand went away yesterday, without saying a word to anybody. I think that he hasn't gone, that he is somewhere in the neighborhood."

"No, Louise, he returned to Paris; but he should have come back here today, or sent some news of himself. I am very much astonished that he hasn't done so."

"Oh, he will no doubt come back tomorrow. He seemed to be so much pleased to be here."

"Do you think so, Louise? Oh, I wish tomorrow were here."

"Madame, you seem very much agitated. Do you think anything has happened to M. Durand?"

"Anything happened? I should hope not! However, men sometimes fight because of a word."

"My God, has M. Durand gone to fight a duel, then?"

"I didn't say that, Louise; you are so curious."

"Pardon me, madame."

The lady's maid was about to leave, when her mistress recalled her,—

"Louise, wait, I still have need of you."

"Yes, madame."

"Fold that gown, and arrange that drawer, which is all in disorder."

Louise approached the drawer, although there was nothing out of order, but she made a semblance of being very much occupied, because she saw that her mistress wanted her to stay there. After a time, Caroline said to her,—

"Louise, I left in Paris a great many things of which I have need, several books, a piece of tapestry work. Could you not go and look for those things for me?"

"Yes, madame, when would you like me to go?"

"Why, as soon as possible; tomorrow, perhaps. I will give you a memorandum of what I want."

"Yes, madame."

"If by chance you should pass by M. Durand's house,— he is our neighbor, I believe, in the Rue Richer."

"Then, madame, I should naturally pass by his house."

"You could then — it will perhaps be possible for you to get some information as to whether the

young man is sick, wounded, if something has happened to him?"

"Certainly, madame, I can inquire as to all that."

"Without saying who sent you?"

"Certainly, madame, I will inquire as if for myself."

"But if something has really happened to this gentleman, then you will go and see him Louise; you will go and see for yourself."

"Yes, madame."

"And you will return here as promptly as possible?"

"You may be sure of that."

Caroline dismissed her maid, feeling a little more satisfied because of what she had ordered her to do. However, she passed the night without getting any rest, and the next day, having no news of Jean, she gave Louise her commissions for Paris.

Jean, accompanied only by his servant, had gone to the place of meeting agreed on with M. Valcourt, and the latter had not made him wait. The result of this meeting was a sword wound which Jean received in his side, for though, as became a pupil of Bellequeue, he managed his weapon very well, his thoughts while fighting were centred only on Caroline. Valcourt, on the contrary, thought only of attacking his opponent, and he was the victor. He was as polite as one should

be in similar circumstances, and as Jean had gained in his estimation since he had fought with him, Valcourt helped the wounded man's servant to place him in the carriage, then he departed.

Jean's wound was not dangerous, but during the journey he lost a great quantity of blood, which weakened him extremely, and despite his desire to send some news of himself to Caroline, the day after the duel he could not even hold a pen, and the doctor ordered him to be as quiet as possible if he wished for a speedy cure. But quietude is not compatible with love, especially when love is unsatisfied. He was irritable at being kept in bed, and was thinking of sending his servant to Luzarche when Louise appeared in his apartment. He started with joy, then he became as pale as death, and almost fainted, because he was not yet in a state to bear the least emotion. The maid ran to help him, exclaiming,—

"Oh, my God, this poor young man! Madame was quite right in being alarmed about him."

Despite his faintness, Jean heard these words, and coming to himself he smiled at Louise.

"What, your mistress has had the kindness to be uneasy about me?" said he.

"Certainly, monsieur, that is to say, I should have pretended to come of myself, but it was she who sent me. You have been fighting a duel, then? you have been wounded?"

"This is nothing, my good Louise, I shall soon

be well, I am sure. I am so happy to know that Caroline — that Madame Dorville has thought of me. Louise, be sure to tell her that as soon as I am fit to go out, I shall go to see her."

"Yes, monsieur, but you mustn't be imprudent and make yourself ill again. Besides, I am very sure that madame will send me to know how you are; or that I shall come of myself, as I did today. Good-by, monsieur, I will go back as quickly as possible to madame, for she is very anxious to have news of you."

Louise departed, and Jean felt much better, for the certainty that Caroline was thinking of him had poured balm into his wounds. The return of the young girl was awaited at Luzarche with uneasiness. Caroline had confessed the cause of her depression to her faithful companions, and the latter shared it, for Madame Marcelin and little Laure were both very fond of Jean, who was entirely without pretension and had made himself very pleasant to them.

Louise returned, they surrounded her, they overwhelmed her with questions. The young girl told all that she knew; Caroline became pale and trembling when she learned that Jean was wounded, and Madame Marcelin exclaimed, "When will men cease to fight duels for trifles?" while little Laure added, "They should not be allowed to fight, only in war, and then they would never do anybody any harm."

When Louise had reassured the ladies by telling them that the doctor had declared the wound not at all dangerous, Caroline made a sign to her maid to follow her into her room, and there she made her repeat the slightest details of her interview with Jean, interrupting her every moment with exclamations.

"Poor young man, and he told you that I was too good, too kind, as if that was not natural? I am almost the cause of this duel. That Valcourt, I hope, will never again come to my house."

"Oh, I like M. Durand much better, madame."

"He thanked you then, Louise, for what I had — because you had gone to see him?"

"Yes, madame, he asserted that he should get well quicker because of having heard from you."

"If I had known, if I had thought —"

Caroline said nothing further, but on the next day but one she reflected that she still had some errands to be done in Paris, and she sent Louise there again, bidding her go and inquire after the wounded man, and to let him know the interest that everybody took in his convalescence.

Jean was much stronger and already far on the way to recovery. Despite the fact that his doctor had forbidden him to do so, he had passed a part of his days in writing to Caroline; he had only wished to thank her for the interest which she had deigned to show him, but his heart inspired his pen, his letter was fervid and in every sentence he

spoke of his love, thinking that he was only speaking of his respect. Louise's visit delighted the invalid, he entrusted her with his letter, and begged her to give it to her mistress. A purse accompanied the letter. He had no need of that to get the lady's maid to carry his letter. Jean's letter disturbed Caroline's mind anew. She read it a hundred times in private, she carried it upon her person to read it again in the garden, her sadness had disappeared, if she was sometimes dreamy, her revery seemed to give her features a more pleasing expression.

Caroline dared not answer Jean's letter, but presently Louise received commands for Paris, and they ordered her not to forget to go and see the young man again. Never had Louise made so many journeys between Paris and Luzarche, but she did not complain of it; for on her arrival and on her return she always made some one happy. Louise had seen Jean again, he was beginning to sit up, but could not yet go out. Jean had entrusted to the young girl another letter to her mistress, and this time he dared to say in it that he should die if he did not obtain Caroline's heart. On receiving this second letter, Caroline who did not wish, of course, that Jean should die in place of getting well, decided to send him a few words in reply.

On receiving this missive, which Louise hastened to carry to him, Jean started with joy, and on reading the letter he felt almost well with pleasure, for Caroline in it told him that she should be

very sorry to cause him any unhappiness, that she awaited with impatience the moment when they should see each other again, but that she did not want him to commit any imprudence, because his health was very dear to all his friends at Luzarche, and all this was said in the few words that the pretty hand had traced.

One may conceive the intoxication, the delirium of Jean on receiving this letter, which he kissed and reread a hundred times. He thanked Louise again and again, he would willingly have thanked Valcourt for having wounded him; for it was to that event that he owed his happiness. Finally, he charged the young girl with a new letter for her mistress, in which he wrote to Caroline that within three days he hoped to be well enough to go to see her. The maid took the letter, she said good-by to Jean, and then she returned to take the coach which was to carry her to her mistress, without noticing that in all her movements she had been followed by a big woman who had looked at her in a very singular manner, and who had also entered the coach for Luzarche.

CHAPTER XIII

Adelaide at Caroline's. The Burglars

One must bear in mind the fact that while all these events were transpiring, Mademoiselle Chopard went daily with unfailing regularity to the Rue de Provence, to Jean's former dwelling, and there sought to obtain from the porter information concerning his erstwhile lodger. Although the answers were never satisfactory, for the man was so absolutely destitute of facts as to be unable to fabricate information in return for her silver pieces, Adelaide did not lose courage; besides she was glad of an occasion to speak of Jean's perfidy, as she was pleased to term it.

The year had rolled by and they none of them knew anything as to the whereabouts or circumstances of the young man. They were beginning to believe that Jean was making a tour of the world and that they were unlikely to see him for some time.

Bellequeue thought that his godson, who had evinced so much regret at being "nothing but an ass," as he put it, had decided to travel and would later on return, polished and accomplished. Rose had an idea that Jean was staying at some

country house with the pretty woman who had seduced him from his allegiance to his affianced bride; while Mademoiselle Adelaide presumed that her unfaithful lover was travelling through Italy, close on the heels of the woman who had cast a spell or charm over him.

Despite the anxiety and chagrin of her unfortunate love affair, Mademoiselle Adelaide grew bigger and fatter every day. Her parents regarded her with admiration, and asserted to each other that her equal could not be found in Paris. Their friends remarked: "She is undoubtedly a very fine woman, but she ought to stop where she is now." The young girls said among themselves: "She's a Colossus! How perfectly horrid to be so big as that!"; while Rose declared that presently Mademoiselle Adelaide would have to stoop when she passed under the Porte Saint-Denis.

The Chopards allowed their daughter perfect liberty, thinking that a damsel who was so very tall would know how to conduct herself in society and never take a false step. However, a woman of five feet nine inches can have a heart as tender as that of a dwarf, and we see every day that avoirdupois is no guaranty against human weakness.

Sometimes Mamma Chopard proposed that they should find a new fiancé for her, but Adelaide would answer, "I don't care for anybody else; I only want to marry this Jean."

However, the larger and stronger Mademoiselle Adelaide grew, the fewer became the aspirants to her hand, for most men like to be able to dance their wives upon their knees, and in considering Adelaide in this particular it dawned upon them that the responsibility and the lady were both too heavy and they wearily withdrew. Madame Chopard, who greatly desired to see her daughter married, was much distressed at the latter's stubbornness; but M. Chopard said to her,—

"She has plenty of time, it won't do any harm to give her time to develop. Later on, I should like to find her a fine fellow built like Hercules, because it's necessary that couples should be of the same size else we could not think it a match. Ha, ha! not bad that."

When one goes almost daily from the Marais to the Rue de Provence one may sometimes happen to pass through the Rue Richer. Adelaide had done so one day, although it was not the shortest way, but she was very fond of walking and the weather was perfect; it was the end of August. Suddenly she saw at the window of an apartment him for whom she had so long been looking. Jean, who was then kept at home by his wound, was sitting beside his window enjoying the air and transporting himself in imagination to Luzarche. Adelaide stopped under a doorway. She wished to assure herself that her eyes were not mistaken, then, the young man having left his window, she

glided quickly into the house, and assuming her most amiable expression, followed her usual method and accosted the porter.

"Does M. Durand live here?"

"Yes, madame, he does."

"He is at home at this moment, is he not? I thought I saw him."

"Yes, madame; why, he can't go out. He's just recovering from an illness, that's to say, a wound, which followed on an affair of the sword. It seems M. Durand is quite a swordsman, he is very good at it."

"What, has M. Durand been fighting a duel?"

"Oh, a duel, well as to that, I don't know much about it. It was his servant who told me something of it."

Adelaide saw that the porter was a gossip who asked nothing better than to talk, and to render him more favorably disposed she put into his hand two pieces of a hundred sous and went into his lodge, while he looked for an unoccupied chair to offer her.

"My dear monsieur, I am a very intimate friend of a relation of M. Durand, who is greatly interested in him. This relation has charged me with the duty of obtaining some information about him. I hope that you will be able to serve me well. You may suppose that the object we have in view is good."

"O madame, one can see that at once."

"How long has M. Jean Durand lived in your house?"

"Why, madame — wait a bit; he came a short time after my wife's death, and she is dead more than a year, a year and something. Heavens, how the time has flown since I became a widower."

"He has no one with him but his servant?"

"No one at all."

"Does he go out often?"

"Go out! Oh, for the past year he has lived like a hermit, he doesn't stir outside his own door."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Why, don't I open the door? If my wife were still living, she would be able to tell you at what hour our tenants got up and went to bed."

"If he doesn't go out, people come to see him. He receives visits from women, no doubt."

"No, as to that, I assure you that no one comes to see him, but three men, professors, masters of art, or so his servant told me, but, as to women, they never come here."

"What, not a lady in a carriage with lackeys? you must be mistaken, porter."

"Why, it would be very difficult for me to be mistaken, I don't budge from my lodge. In my wife's time it was different, I even went to the play, to the grand opera. We had a gentleman here who was employed in the clouds to pull the cords; but now that's all done with, there is nothing more of that."

"And what about this duel, this wound? He didn't get that by staying at home, did he?"

"Ah, that's different, I was going to tell you. During the past summer, M. Durand has been out a good deal, he has even stayed away for eight or ten days sometimes."

"He has slept away from here?"

"He has slept in the country, at Luzarche, or so his servant told me, for he went there once with his master."

"He went to Luzarche? With whom did he go to stay?"

"With a beautiful lady, our neighbor, who lives over there, four doors farther on. I know that because I recognized Madame Dorville's maid, who came here two days ago to see M. Durand."

"A lady, close by here, and he goes to her country house!" muttered Adelaide, rising in great agitation. "Ah, I have found a thread at last."

"You have found my thread?" said the porter, looking on the ground.

"And you say that this lady is called Madame Dorville?"

"Yes, oh, I know the neighbors; not so well as my wife did, though."

"She is an immensely rich woman who has three carriages, is she not?"

"Oh, come now, she hasn't as much as a cabriolet, but it seems that she has a fine property at Luzarche."

"And M. Durand has passed several days at her country-house?"

"Oh, he almost lives there. As soon as he is cured it seems he's going back there."

"And this duel, why did he fight it?"

"Oh, as to that, I know nothing about it. I have often asked his servant, but he knows no more about it than I do."

"And the maid comes to inquire about monsieur?"

"She has already been twice, but I don't think she is coming today. It is past her time."

"What time does she usually come?"

"In the morning; that is to say, about half-past eleven."

"That's enough, tomorrow I will come back and see you. Monsieur porter, I don't need to ask you to keep silence in regard to all this."

"Oh, be easy, I shall say nothing, it is dead so far as I am concerned. You can understand that I am used to keeping such secrets as that."

Adelaide strode home with great speed. She was quite wild when she got there, and exclaimed as she went in,—

"My trouble has not been lost; at last I am on the track."

"What is the matter with you, my daughter?" asked Madame Chopard, "you seem disturbed."

"I tell you, mamma, that I am going to get to the bottom of this intrigue. I am on the track."

"What track?" said M. Chopard, "for, my dear child, there are tracks and tracks."

"You don't understand me, papa; I mean that I have discovered M. Jean, that I know where he is and all that he has done during the fourteen months since you went to see him."

"Can it be possible? Heavens! what a spirit she has!"

"But I thought he was travelling?"

"That was a lie. He was in Italy — in the Rue Richer. Oh, I knew it all along. I knew that it was a woman for whom he had abandoned me. Monsieur goes and passes whole fortnights at her country-house. It seems that he has even fought a duel for her; he has had an affair of the sword. A woman that men fight duels about can't be anything. That insolent Rose wanted to make me believe that she was a princess. She hasn't even a cabriolet. But, all the same, I shall go and see Madame Dorville, I shall speak to her."

"What, my daughter! you will surely never do such a thing as that."

"Mamma, I have made my plans. First, of all, I must revenge myself. You can't suppose that I have been running to these porters every day for the past fourteen months, only to exchange compliments with them."

"But, my dearest —"

"Papa, don't argue with me, I beg of you, or I shall be ill."

"We must let her follow her own ideas," said Madame Chopard, "that's the best way, besides she has too much good sense to do anything foolish."

"Certainly, I am of that opinion also," answered M. Chopard, "after all a woman of that height should know how to conduct herself. One cannot be shipwrecked when one has such a fine port. There, that's pretty, isn't it."

At nine o'clock the next morning Adelaide was prowling about in the Rue Richer, for fear of missing the arrival of the lady's maid. At ten o'clock she went and installed herself in the porter's lodge, and some of M. Chopard's silver coins again slipped into the hands of the gossipy porter. At length, at a quarter past eleven, Louise came into the house. She bowed, asked for M. Durand and went up.

"You didn't speak to her," said the porter to Adelaide.

"No, I would much rather that she did not see me."

"Oh, well, then, not a word about it. In your place, I should have chatted with her a little in the lodge here. You could have made her talk. Ah, my wife knew pretty well how to open a conversation."

Adelaide allowed the porter to do all the talking, and waited impatiently till the lady's maid should come down from Jean's. Louise reappeared

before long and left the house. Adelaide quitted the lodge and followed the servant who, after going for a moment into her mistress' house, went to take the coach for Luzarche. We have seen that Mademoiselle Chopard got into it with her.

On the way, Louise, who was seated behind Adelaide, did not notice her, and Mademoiselle Chopard kept silent, speaking to none of the party. They arrived presently at Luzarche, where Louise hastened to her mistress, and Adelaide went about the neighborhood trying to get some information as to Madame Dorville's conduct.

Caroline hastily opened Jean's letter. She did not seek longer to hide what she thought, and showed her joy freely on learning that within a few days he would be with her. She questioned Louise as to the effect her note had produced, and she made her repeat a hundred times the slightest details in regard to the pleasure which her letter had given Jean. Then Caroline said to herself, "Yes, he loves me, he really loves me; I cannot doubt it. Everything that has happened within the past year, his desire to please me — Poor young man! I should be very ungrateful not to give him some return for that. But why should I hide from myself that I also love him? that despite myself I am always thinking of him? Am I not my own mistress? and is he not now worthy to be my husband?" Caroline had given herself up to these sweet thoughts. She had retired to

her room, that she might be free to dream there of her love, when Louise came to tell her mistress that a big lady asked to see her.

"What, another visitor from Paris?"

"I don't think so, madame. I don't think she is one of your Parisian acquaintances. I should have recognized her very easily, she is so enormous, this lady; however, one can see that she is young. I think that she was in the coach this morning coming down here."

"I will go down and see this lady."

Caroline went down and found Mademoiselle Chopard, whom they had shown into the drawing-room, where Laure and Madame Marcelin were. Adelaide's first care was to scan the hostess from head to feet. The result of this examination was an expression of very bad humor, for no one could think Caroline ugly.

"What do you wish, madame?" asked Caroline in the sweet tone and that charming voice which she could not change.

"I wish, madame, to speak to you in private," answered Adelaide, frowning and showing the end of her tongue.

Caroline was surprised at the big woman's tone, but she answered her,—

"I am with my dearest friends, madame. I have no secrets from them; and I don't think that you can have anything private to say to me."

"Pardon me, madame, but it is very private."

Caroline could not forbear smiling, but she led Mademoiselle Chopard into another room, while little Laure said to Madame Marcelin,—

"That lady looked like a man dressed in woman's clothes."

Caroline offered Adelaide a seat and took one herself, waiting for her to explain her business. Adelaide was more embarrassed than she had thought possible before Madame Dorville, for no one had told her anything but good in all the neighborhood, and virtuous people are much more imposing than others. However, she had formed her plan according to what she had learned, and she began,—

"This is Madame Dorville?"

"Yes, madame."

"I am an unmarried woman, madame, and I shall be twenty-one years old on St. John's day."

"Pardon, mademoiselle, one is often deceived."

"It is true that I look very settled for my age, but still I am only twenty years old, as I said."

"I don't doubt it, mademoiselle."

"For the matter of that, madame, if I am not married I ought to have been for a long time past, and you, madame, are the cause of my still being an unmarried girl."

"I, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, madame, you. You know M. Jean Durand?"

"M. Durand? Yes, mademoiselle," answered

Caroline, blushing in spite of herself, and beginning to take a greater interest in the conversation.

"And you have, then, madame, a very bad acquaintance."

"Why, mademoiselle, explain yourself, I beg of you."

"Oh, yes, madame, I'll explain myself; that's what I came for. You know, madame, that my name is Adelaide Chopard. I am the daughter of people who are very well known, I flatter myself. My father is a retired distiller in the Marais, and when I wish to take the trouble to put anything in brandy I can do it so that it will be preserved like the Egyptian mummies."

"It was not of that, mademoiselle, that you came here to talk to me."

"No, madame, but one likes to make known in passing that one has had some education, and that one can maintain an argument with self-possession."

"I am persuaded of that, mademoiselle."

"Well, then, madame, to return to M. Durand, you know that my parents were intimate friends of his, and from the tenderest infancy they had resolved to unite us."

"What, to unite you? you, mademoiselle? with M. Durand?"

"Yes, madame, I myself."

"But very often the plans formed by parents are not at all pleasing to their children."

"On the contrary, madame, those of ours were very pleasing to us, we were always together. We played together, being the papa and the mamma. M. Jean could not pass a day without seeing me. This was so notorious that in the neighborhood they called us Paul and Virginia."

Caroline could hardly hide the impression which Adelaide's story had made upon her; the latter, who perceived the emotion which she had caused, was already enjoying her vengeance, and decided to sacrifice even her own reputation to injure Jean in her rival's mind. Mademoiselle Adelaide had a way of adoring people which was far from agreeable for the object of her passion; but women who love thus rarely have their love returned. True love never resembles hate.

"And what then, mademoiselle?" said Caroline, forcing herself to hide her agitation.

"Well, madame, then we grew and our love developed more and more. M. Jean adored me, as he did not cease to repeat to me. He became so ardent that our parents judged that it was time for us to marry. When my betrothed's mother died we had been engaged for six weeks. That event retarded our marriage, but I thought that this delay would only make him more in love with me. I already regarded M. Jean as my husband, he was often alone with me, he was so pressing in his attentions, so loving and I was so weak that —"

"I understand you, mademoiselle, it is useless

to tell me anything further about it," said Caroline, who was grievously pained.

"Well, madame, you may well believe that after all that, when I had the right to regard M. Jean as mine, when my parents had made the purchases and all the preparations for our union, this ungrateful wretch, this perfidious man, suddenly ceased to come to our house, and told my father that he could no longer think of marrying me because he was in love with you, and that you expected him to marry you."

"M. Jean said that, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, madame. Oh, he is quite capable of denying it, I have no doubt; but ask him if he knows Adelaide Chopard? If he was to have married her? if the day of our marriage was not fixed? if his godfather had not had a pair of tight-fitting trousers made for the ball? and if he be not the most deceitful of men? Which is possible, you see, madame, for he may dare to give me the lie."

Caroline had risen, she walked agitatedly about the room, Adelaide followed her and resumed after a moment,—

"Certainly, madame, if I came to find you my parents prompted me; but, in fact, I love M. Jean. After all that I have done for him I could almost believe myself his wife. If he does not marry me I am resolved to carry myself to the greatest extremities. I know that it is for you that he abandoned me, but I know also, madame, that

you are excessively virtuous and capable of the greatest sacrifices. I had thought that you would be touched by my love, by my situation, that you would not deprive me of a fickle lover, whom I still love, despite his perfidy; and that is why, madame, I decided to come and see you, and to confess candidly to you my unfortunate position."

"You estimated me rightly, mademoiselle," answered Caroline, seeking to overcome her emotion, "I should be very much grieved to be the cause of your misfortune. In the first place, I do not know why M. Durand should suppose that I would accept his hand, there has never been even the question of love between us. I have much friendship for M. Durand, but nothing more than that. I repeat to you, mademoiselle, that if M. Durand wishes to return to you, far from putting any obstacle in his way, I shall be the first to beg him to do so. At the point to which matters have come with you, a man of honor could not retract his promises."

"Ah, madame, I did not expect less than this from you," cried Adelaide, "and my gratitude—"

"You owe me none, mademoiselle. I assure you this resolution costs me little, and that you are very greatly mistaken in supposing me to be at all in love with M. Durand."

"In that case, madame, I shall go away lighter than a feather. I have every belief that this inconstant man will come back to me as soon as he

no longer has any hope of winning madame. For the rest, here is my address, and if madame should doubt the truth of all that I have told her, I beg of her to go and obtain some information in the neighborhood. She will learn there that the Chopards —"

"Oh, I believe you, mademoiselle; this address is useless to me."

"Forgive me, madame, show it only to M. Jean, and you'll see what a grimace he will make. Madame, I do not wish to take more of your time, I will return to Paris and my parents, who will be very uneasy as to my long absence. Remember, madame, upon you depends the happiness of the victim of love and of the promises of her betrothed husband."

"If it only depends upon me, mademoiselle, M. Jean will do his duty."

Adelaide curtseyed deeply to Caroline, and the latter led her as far as the vestibule, then after another curtsey, still deeper than the first, Adelaide departed. She was obliged to pay a high price for a chaise in order to return to Paris that evening. But Adelaide was too pleased at the success of the step she had taken to care about the money; she made Papa Chopard's crowns fly, and on the way home said to herself,—

"They are at variance; parted for ever, I am sure of it. That woman has too much self-respect to forgive him, and Jean, who isn't half so guilty

as I have made him out to be, will not crave her pardon. Besides, I shall have an eye on them, I'm not on bad terms with the porters."

When Mademoiselle Chopard had gone, Caroline, yielding to the sadness she had been forced to restrain, went and shut herself up in her room and there gave free vent to her tears.

"How he has deceived me," she said to herself. "And I believed him frankness itself. To have taken advantage of this woman, this young girl, after a promise of marriage. To play thus with her parents — with a whole family. That is indeed very bad conduct. But if it were not—oh, it is only too true. This girl must have loved him well to be willing to make such a confession, and he has loved her also. I confess I should have thought he had better taste. But perhaps I am unjust. This woman may seem very good-looking to some. She has a fine figure. Ah, Jean, how you have deceived me. But then see all that he has done to please me during the past year. No matter, I can no longer esteem a man who has deceived a woman on the strength of a promise of marriage, and I will never marry a man whom I do not respect."

Those in the house soon perceived the change which had taken place in Caroline's mood. Madame Marcelin and little Laure asked her the cause of it, but Caroline assured them that they were mistaken, and that nothing had occurred to

distress her. Louise, thinking to bring a smile to her mistress' lips, spoke to her of Jean. Then Caroline assumed a severe tone and forbade the young woman to mention Jean's name in future. Louise, greatly astonished, made no reply, but to herself she said,—

"My mistress has changed since that big lady came here, she isn't the same at all. That fat woman would have done better to stay in Paris."

Two days had passed since Adelaide's visit to Luzarche. Caroline was still sad and her agitation grew momentarily, for from what Jean had written her she expected to see him, and this interview would determine whether Adelaide had told her the truth. Caroline's household also ardently desired the arrival of the young man, believing that his presence would dissipate her sadness.

They say that happiness is the best medicine, and really satisfaction of mind and contentment of soul are excellent balms for the wounds of the body. Caroline's letter had hastened Jean's cure, and three days after receiving it he started from Paris, eagerly giving himself up to the sweetest dreams which a lover can indulge who is on the eve of learning whether his love is returned. Jean did not, however, go at a gallop this time, for he was still too weak to ride on horseback. A carriage brought him to his destination. Louise, who saw him alight from the vehicle, ran to meet him, exclaiming,—

"Oh, how pleased I am to see you, monsieur."

"My good Louise! and your mistress?"

"She is in the drawing-room. I hope you are going to make her as cheerful as she used to be."

"What do you mean?"

"That madame has changed during the past few days; we cannot imagine what is the matter with her."

Jean listened no further to Louise; he was impatient to see Caroline and hastened to the drawing-room, where he found her seated with Madame Marcelin and Laure. At the sight of Jean she could not quell her violent emotion, but she restrained herself and received him politely. Her icy tone as she asked after his health, the reserved expression of her features and the complete change in her manner quite chilled Jean, who looked at her in surprise and did not know to what cause to attribute the change which he noticed in her.

Little Laure and Madame Marcelin were very friendly to the young man and he thanked them kindly for their interest in his health. But while speaking to them his gaze was fixed on Caroline. He wanted to read in her eyes why this beloved woman would not deign to cast a glance upon him. Jean saw that she was greatly moved, that her respiration was difficult, that a secret sorrow seemed to have altered her charming features. He was on the point of throwing himself at her feet and supplicating her to tell him the reason

of her coldness, when Caroline, who desired to put an end to an uncertainty which was killing her, suddenly left the drawing-room to go into the garden. Jean was beside her immediately.

"In heaven's name! how have I offended you, madame? What have I done to deserve to be received in this manner?" cried Jean, stopping her.

"It seems to me, monsieur, that there's nothing extraordinary in the greeting I have accorded you today. I have expressed the pleasure I felt in seeing you restored to health, and—"

"No, madame, you are not the same with me; forgive me for exacting anything further, but you were not used to address me in that icy tone, with that ceremonious politeness. Why should I still hide from you all I have dared to hope? My letters have taught you the secret of my heart! Yes, madame, I love you!—I have loved you from the first day I saw you. That love has changed all my being; it was solely in the hope of pleasing you that I applied myself to study, that I sought to acquire the tone and usages of a society which you adorned. If I am anything now, it is to you that I owe it, and when you seemed to look kindly upon me, when your dear letter aroused in my heart the sweetest hope that the heart of man can experience, and when I hastened to your side, intoxicated with love, I found you entirely changed; coldness, indifference, were the only sentiments which you evinced for me."

"It may be, monsieur, that you overestimate — that you deceive yourself as to the degree of interest which I bear for you," answered Caroline, "as I also was mistaken as to the feelings which I believed you to possess."

"What do you mean, madame?"

"If, however, you have any friendship for me, swear to me that you will answer frankly the questions I am about to put to you."

"I swear to you, madame, that I will do so."

"Do you know a young lady named Adelaide Chopard?"

"Adelaide Chopard?" answered Jean, quite surprised at hearing that name uttered by Caroline. "Yes, madame, yes, of course I do."

Jean's agitation finally convinced Caroline, and she said, looking fixedly at him,—

"You redden, monsieur, I see that I am not misinformed. You were to have married that young lady?"

"That is to say, madame —"

"The time for the marriage was fixed. Mademoiselle Chopard already looked upon you as — as her husband — is this true, monsieur?"

"Yes, madame, I cannot deny it."

"I have no need to learn anything further about it, monsieur, a man of honor should keep his engagements; above all, when he has — But you understand me, monsieur. I leave you — nor can I hide from you the fact that hereafter your

presence will be painful to me. Return to her who looked upon you — and justly so — as her husband. Good-by, monsieur, good-by forever."

Caroline had gone, for her tears were suffocating her. Had she wept before Jean, he would have fallen at her feet, and perhaps a fuller, franker explanation would have deranged Mademoiselle Adelaide's plan; but unfortunately Caroline was no longer there, and Jean, overwhelmed, stunned and wounded at being treated in this manner when his conscience told him he had done nothing to deserve it — Jean, after remaining motionless for some moments in the garden, resumed his natural pride and left Madame Dorville's dwelling, cursing women and love.

Louise met the young man just as he was leaving.

"Where are you going now, monsieur?" said she to him.

"I am leaving," answered Jean in a stifled voice; "I am going from this place where I ought never to have come."

Louise was seized with astonishment; she could not understand the sudden departure of a person whose arrival had been so anxiously expected, and she was still in the court trying to reason out the meaning of it when Jean was quite far from Caroline's dwelling.

Our hero returned to Paris, overwhelmed by the strange welcome Caroline had accorded him,

not conceiving for a moment that the knowledge of what had passed between him and the Chopard family had lost him her heart, for he had no suspicion as to what Adelaide had said to her.

"My conduct was light," said he to himself, "and I have no doubt wounded Mademoiselle Chopard's self-respect. But ought I to sacrifice to her the happiness of my whole life? and ought Madame Dorville to make a crime of that of which she alone is the cause? It was she who taught me that I had a heart. I had no love for Adelaide and I adored Caroline, and that is the reason that she doesn't wish to see me, that she banishes me from her presence. Am I so culpable as all that? No, it's because she doesn't love me, never has loved me and, ashamed of having written too tender a letter, she has seized on this as a pretext to break with me."

Jean returned home, he shut himself up in his apartment. He regretted his tastes, his inclinations and his indifference to former times.

"Then," said he, "I was much happier than I am now. What need had I of seeking instruction. The people among whom I lived thought me well enough. I have acquired some acquaintances, but I have lost the careless freedom which sufficed for my happiness. It was for her that I wished to change, and this is how she has recompensed me."

In his vexation, Jean threw his books as far from him as he possibly could, then lay down on

his bed, swearing to think no more of Caroline. But her image was incessantly present to his mind; he thought he saw her, he spoke to her, he heard her voice. The whole night through, this dear image never departed from his thought. It was the hour before dawn, and Jean was trying in vain to rest when a loud sound struck his ear; he listened, the sound came from the window, it seemed to him as though some one was forcing his shutter. Not doubting but that some burglars were about to gain an entrance to his room, Jean seized the pistols which were always on his bedside table; then he feigned sleep, held his weapons hidden, and awaited events.

Two men appeared at the window.

"There's a light there," said one to the other, "that's singular, they told us that the boss was sleeping in the country to-night."

"Well, let's go in, all the same, as long as we are here. So much the worse for him, if he's there."

And the two wretches climbed in at the window, and advanced into the apartment.

"There's some one in bed there, let's get away," said one.

"No; no; there's money to be got here — we must finish the job. And for fear he should wake up — it's necessary —"

"Ah, you said we shouldn't go so far as that."

"I didn't think that we should find anybody. But in forcing the desk we must make a noise, he

will wake up, he will shout, and I want to prevent him from doing that."

So saying the scoundrel approached the bed, holding a poigniard in his hand. He was about to raise his arm on Jean when the latter, rising by a movement as quick as lightning, presented to each burglar the muzzle of a pistol. The two wretches were struck with terror; however, they were about to fly when Jean himself let his arms drop, and exclaimed,—

"Oh, my God, this is not a dream — it is you, Demar? Gervais?"

"It's Jean," cried the two brigands, as they again approached the bed. And for some seconds all three looked at each other without being able to say a word further.

"It is you," at last resumed Jean, "you whom I meet thus? Demar, you were going to kill me!"

"Of course I was; I didn't know it was you."

"Wretched man! and have you come to this. To the last degree of crime! this is where idleness, the taste for debauchery, and that hatred for honest work which you call love of liberty have led you."

Gervais seemed utterly annihilated, but Demar shouted,—

"Come now, my good fellow, do you think that we came up here to listen to your moralizing? We must have money. You have it, and, as you remember, all was to be in common between us."

Jean looked indignantly at Demar; then he got

up, placed his pistols on a table, opened his desk, and drew from it two bags of money; he presented one to Demar and one to Gervais, saying,—

"I could deliver you up to justice, but I prefer to give you the means of retrieving your conduct. Each one of these bags contains twelve hundred francs. With that you can leave France and go into another country to look for work and so renounce your infamous occupation."

"You have a good deal more money there perhaps?" said Demar, who had placed himself between Jean and the table on which the pistols were, "and we can force you to give it up."

"I will give you nothing more; I have no other weapons, and now you can murder me if you will!"

"No, no, never!" said Gervais placing himself in front of Jean. "Come, Demar, let's cut, it's time. I think I heard a noise in the street."

The street was quiet, but Gervais had already escaped and Demar decided to follow him. Then Jean threw himself on his bed again, saying,—

"And these are my school playmates, the companions of my youth, with whom I exchanged vows and made plans for the future!"

CHAPTER XIV

The Little Maid Again. A Double Marriage

Regret that he had followed a different road in life from that of his two former companions in pleasure had no place in Jean's thoughts we may be sure, after his seeing them again. On the day following that on which they had broken into his room with murderous intent, he took up his books again and resumed the studies which for the past few days he had entirely forgotten in the sorrow and disappointment that had so suddenly come upon him.

"If she does not love me," said he to himself; "I shall like at least to owe it to her that I do not go through life a fool and an ignoramus, for I feel that it is sweet indeed to owe her something."

The young man returned to his study with renewed zest, for that alone could make him forget his loneliness. Since his return from Luzarche he had not been out of the house. He thought incessantly of Caroline, feeling assured that he could not cease to love her, and making no futile efforts to banish her from his memory. She had forbidden Jean to see her again, and he had too

much pride to brave this command. Although he had no conception of the fact that Caroline had banished him from her presence because of his former engagement to marry Mademoiselle Chopard, and although hoping in the bottom of his heart that the pretty woman had not forgotten him—for lovers always have a mental reservation—Jean would not take the slightest step towards a reconciliation with her he loved.

On her part, Caroline, after her interview with Jean, had promised, nay sworn to herself, to think no more of a man whom she deemed unworthy of her love. But is the heart always in accord with the mind? with the dictates of reason? In vain Caroline tried to be cheerful, lively, to enjoy herself as formerly; a sigh would betray her secret trouble, and then she would seek to cover it with a smile. Those about her forbore to mention Jean's name in her presence, because they had noticed that the sound of it redoubled her sadness. Caroline began to think that he obeyed her command too strictly. She experienced a secret desire to speak with him of whom she was ever thinking, but she dared not herself bring about this conversation.

"He will never come back," said she to herself, "he has too much pride after my telling him I never would see him again. However, he must really be very much in love with me to have changed so much in a year. I ought, perhaps, to

have remembered that when he was here. And this duel! was not I, in some measure, the cause of it? It was jealousy that made Valcourt insult him, and if Jean had been killed I should have been the cause of it — and for me to forget all that! But this Adelaide Chopard — what she told me made me ill. And he didn't even seek to excuse his conduct towards her — because he knew that he could not!"

Caroline did not console herself by these ruminations, she did not regain her cheerfulness. However, she could take no further steps to see Jean, who remained shut up in his apartments. Here, then, were two beings who loved each other, who ardently desired to see each other again, and who would perhaps always remain separated one from the other because it had pleased a spiteful and jealous girl to utter the basest lies and calumnies. But they say that there is a god for lovers; let us see what he will do to help Jean.

Three weeks had passed since the young man had returned from Luzarche. Three weeks pass very quickly when one is pleasurably engaged; they are eternal when one is sighing, when one is filled with regret, and devoid of all hope. Caroline had found the country monotonous, and although it was only the end of September, she had returned to her house in Paris. Perhaps she also thought that she should feel better if she were living quite near to him whom she would never

see again. But Jean, who believed Caroline to be still at her country house, never thought of showing himself at the window.

During these three weeks Mademoiselle Chopard had made frequent visits to her dear friend, the porter of Jean's house, and had learned that the young man had returned from the country the same day on which he had gone there; that since that time he had not gone outside his house, and seemed to be in a very morose temper. Adelaide was delighted. She rubbed her hands, saying,—

"I have succeeded. They are on bad terms with each other; they no longer meet. I shall leave Jean in his loneliness for some time; then one fine day I shall appear before him and say to him, 'You are a very unfaithful fellow, but I love you still, although papa and mamma have forbidden me to do so. Marry me, and I will forgive you.' Then he will marry me, and this pretty woman — whom I thought frightful — will wither away with grief."

So to keep herself always well informed as to what was passing Adelaide often went to the Rue Richer; she inquired whether a woman had not been to see the young gentleman who lived in the entresol, and the porter answered,—

"Not a one. Not a woman, not a maid, not a servant," and to pay him for all these "nots" the huge damsel slipped some pieces of silver into his hand.

One morning when mademoiselle was returning, according to her custom, from obtaining eminently satisfactory information, and as she was thinking that she would soon have an interview with Jean, at the corner of the Boulevard du Temple and the Rue Charlot she found herself face to face with Rose, who, with her basket on her arm, was going to make some purchases.

The little maid when she saw Adelaide made a face at her; but the strapping girl, delighted to take revenge by mystifying Rose, stopped and said to her mockingly,—

"Ah, it's you, Mademoiselle Rose?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Chopard."

"You are out very early."

"One might say the same of you. To be sure, your papa is certain that no one will elope with you; at least, that they won't go through fire and water to do it!"

Adelaide bit her lips, and resumed,—

"And M. Jean's love affair, have you any news of it?"

"Perhaps!"

"Is he still in Italy?"

"No, he's in Siberia just now."

"Ha! Mademoiselle Rose, and you thought I could be deceived by you — but I'm as sly as you are, and you know very well that the poor young man never stirs from his apartment in the Rue Richer!"

"M. Jean lives in the Rue Richer?"

"Oh, yes, pretend to be ignorant now! And this great lady who had three carriages, who was a millionnaire — I know now, as well as you do, this beautiful Madame Dorville."

"You know —"

"Come, Mademoiselle Rose, no one can hide anything from me. I know and see everything. I've told you that Jean will be my husband, and he will be. You little know Adelaide Chopard."

Adelaide had gone, and Rose remained for some moments totally surprised by all she had heard. Presently she said,—

"What! She knows Jean's address! And I didn't know it. He's in Paris, and I ignorant of what is going on — this big sneak looked as if she were making game of me. Oh, I mustn't lose a minute, I must run to the Rue Richer. I really must find him also — this villain of a Jean who's forgotten us. Monsieur sent me out to buy a truffled fowl because he wanted to feast today — but whether he dines or whether he doesn't dine, is all the same to me, it's essential before all else that I see M. Jean."

And Rose ran all the way to the Rue Richer. She asked in all the houses where she thought it likely that Jean should have apartments, and at length she found his dwelling. She went up, she went in, she was with him before she had got her breath.

"It's Rose," cried Jean, as she came in panting.

"Yes, monsieur — it's me, it's Rose, who finds you at last. So you are here, are you? Oh, it's very nice of you to hide from your friends like this, and from your kind godfather, who loves you so dearly. To make us think you were not in Paris, and to stay for fifteen months without coming to see us!"

"Yes, Rose, it's true; I've done very wrong."

"Can you think that M. Bellequeue is still angry with you? He who loves you so dearly. If it hadn't been for that big Adelaide, I shouldn't have known your address yet. But I've run so hard, I can't stand any more of it."

"Poor Rose!"

"Kiss me now, that will make me forget how tired I am."

Jean kissed Rose with a very good heart, then the little maid asked the young man what he had been doing during the fifteen months, and how he had got on in his love affair.

Jean related all that had passed between him and Caroline; his happiness, his intoxication of delight when he believed that she loved him, and his despair during the three weeks that he had failed of seeing her he loved.

Rose, who had listened to Jean with deep attention, now said,—

"In the first place, monsieur, you must not grieve, for Madame Dorville still loves you."

"You think so, Rose?"

"I don't think it, I'm sure of it."

"Why, she told me she didn't want to see me again."

"Because she was angry then."

"She treated me with coldness, with the greatest indifference."

"Ah, that proves nothing. What proves more than that is the charming letter she wrote you three days before. For her to have changed like that, some one must have given her false reports of you, told some horrible lies about you. Those Chopards are mixed up in this, I'll wager!"

"Do you think so, Rose?"

"I am sure of it. Wasn't it through that lump of an Adelaide that I learned your address? She little thought she was serving me so well; but we'll see if she's cleverer than me. So Madame Dorville lives close by here?"

"Yes, but she is in the country now."

"That's good. Well, good-by, M. Jean, you'll see me again soon."

"Rose, what are you going to do? Remember, I forbid you to go to Madame Dorville from me; I have no desire to go back to her."

"Yes, yes, that is all right — that's enough," said Rose as she departed, leaving her basket at Jean's, for she had forgotten all about her master's dinner, and had decided to start immediately for Luzarche, although she did not yet know under

what pretext she could present herself to Caroline. But while passing along the street, she said suddenly,—

"If Madame Dorville still loves M. Jean, no doubt she will have come to Paris, in place of staying so far from him. When she is near him, there is some chance of their meeting."

Rose had rightly divined. She went to Madame Dorville's house and the porter said to her,—

"Madame Dorville has been in Paris for a week; She is at home, go up."

Rose went up, but when she reached the door she paused for a moment to think what she could say when they asked her what she wanted; it was highly necessary she should think of this point, but Rose had a lively imagination, and after a moment's reflection, she had decided on her course of action. She rang Caroline's bell; Louise opened the door.

"Mademoiselle, does Madame Dorville live here?" asked Rose.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Goodness, I don't know whether I ought to trouble madame or not; I came for—"

"Won't you tell me what you wish, mademoiselle?"

"Very willingly; M. Durand was at your mistress's country house at Luzarche this summer?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"M. Durand took a little book there bound in

red morocco. Goodness, I can't remember the title now. M. Durand values this book very highly because it was his mother's, and I came to see if you had found it at Luzarche, mademoiselle?"

"I have found nothing of the sort, mademoiselle. I don't know if madame has seen the book of which you speak; wait a moment, and I'll go and ask her."

Louise went to her mistress and reported this conversation. At the name of Jean, Caroline blushed, then she answered indifferently,—

"It is a maid, you say, who has come to ask for it?"

"Yes, madame."

"Is she still there?"

"Yes, madame."

"Tell her to come in, for you explain so badly that I don't understand a word you've been saying to me."

Louise returned to Rose, and said,—

"Come in, mademoiselle."

Rose laughed in her sleeve, for she had felt sure she would be asked in.

The little maid presented herself to Caroline with a modest, gentle manner; the latter looked at her kindly, and signed to Louise to depart, then she said to Rose,—

"You came for a book, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, madame."

"You are in M. Durand's service?"

"No, madame; I have for a long time served M. Bellequeue, M. Jean's godfather—a very fine man, who loves M. Jean as if he were his own son."

"I know it—M. Durand has sometimes spoken to me of his godfather, with whom he was on bad terms, I believe."

"Yes, madame."

"Did M. Durand send you, then?"

"Oh, no, madame, I took the liberty of coming of my own accord."

"Is M. Jean—in Paris?"

"Yes, madame, but he never goes outside his door. For a long time past I had not seen him, and it made me very sorry to find him looking so lonely, so sorrowful."

"What; you think he is suffering from some sorrow?"

"Well, of course I know nothing of his affairs—but—"

"You have known M. Jean for a long time?"

"Oh, yes, madame, I went into M. Bellequeue's service when I was very young, and M. Jean often came to his godfather's."

"You were then aware of his love affair with Mademoiselle Adelaide Chopard?"

"The love affair of whom, madame?"

"Of M. Jean with the young lady I have mentioned, whom he has known and loved from infancy."

"M. Jean known mademoiselle from infancy?

Why, what a lie! He had never seen her, he had never thought of her until M. Bellequeue got the idea of that marriage into his head."

"What! You are sure? Sit you down, my little girl."

Caroline indicated to Rose a chair which stood near her own, and Rose seated herself modestly on the edge.

"It was M. Jean's godfather, then, who thought of marrying him to Mademoiselle Chopard?"

"Yes, madame. Ah, it was the most foolish idea my master ever had; but then, M. Jean was rather young and a little heedless, and they thought the marriage would make him more settled."

"And he was greatly in love with this young lady?"

"In love with Mademoiselle Chopard? No, really he never was the least little bit in love with her."

"Never? Ah, you are deceiving me?"

"Why, no, madame; I know all about it, for I was M. Jean's confidant; he told me all he thought and felt on the subject; he only consented to the marriage to please his mother. He did not know what love was, then. But when he did fall in love, it was not with Mademoiselle Adelaide; indeed, on the contrary, from that moment he decided to break the engagement. And that was what made his godfather angry with him."

"Can it be? And you think — ah, tell me all,

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Caroline drew her chair close to that of the little maid.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY ERNEST FUHR.

my dear child, tell me the whole truth. I — I am also interested in M. Jean."

As she said these words, Caroline drew her chair close to that of the little maid, then taking from one of her hands a ring set with a very fine stone, she put it on Mademoiselle Rose's finger, who allowed her to do so, merely saying,—

"Ah, madame, how could you ever believe that M. Jean had loved Mademoiselle Chopard?"

"However, he was to have married her."

"Because his mother desired the marriage."

"He looked upon Mademoiselle Adelaide as his future wife."

"That is, he looked upon her as all the others did — without paying her the slightest attention."

"That is not what the young lady told me. She confessed to me, on the contrary, that led away by her weakness — her love for M. Jean, and believing he already had the rights of a husband over her —"

"Good heavens! How horrible. She dared to say such a thing — she must have a front! That poor young man — he to have seduced Mademoiselle Adelaide! No, madame, no; that is not so! It was to revenge herself on him for having broken off the engagement that Mademoiselle Chopard invented such falsehoods. Why, if her parents knew she'd said that — well, I don't think even M. Chopard would try to make a pun about that."

Caroline believed Rose; she needed little to

persuade her that Jean had not conducted himself towards Adelaide in the manner of which that young lady had accused him. She, Madame Dorville, made Rose repeat all she knew about Jean, about his childhood, his disposition, about his projected marriage, about the error into which those about him had fallen on seeing the change in Jean's habits and temper. Finally, Caroline was convinced that it was she alone whom Jean had loved, whom he loved still, and she exclaimed,—

"As a reward for his love, for all he has done to please me, I sent him away, I treated him with scorn. Ah, Rose, how much I blame myself!"

"One word from you, madame, will restore his happiness."

"Yes, but where can I say it? He no longer comes here, and I can't go and seek him."

"Well, madame, are there not a thousand ways? Wait — yes," and as Louise came into the room, Rose whispered in Caroline's ear, and the latter answered,—

"Yes, Rose—yes, I consent. By the way, what about this book?"

"Oh, it is found, madame," answered the little maid, smiling, then she made Caroline a beautiful curtsey and briskly departed.

Rose went up to Jean's again. Seeing the joy which shone in her eyes, the young man wished to question her; but Rose was in very much of a hurry, she must return to her master who was

expecting her, and she contented herself with telling Jean that she should inform his godfather that he was coming to see him during the day.

"Yes, Rose, I will go to-day."

"Don't fail to do so, monsieur."

So saying, the little maid went off, and returned to her master, who was kept at home by the gout, and who knew not what to make of her long absence. But as she went in, Rose called out,—

"I have found him! he's coming here. I have seen his sweetheart. Oh, but she's a most beautiful woman; what a face! what manners! She's an angel, in fact, and wait — look at that, how it shines!"

Rose showed her ring to Bellequeue, who could not understand his maid's joy, and asked her if she had found that ring in the fowl he had told her to buy. While Rose was explaining to her master what she had been doing all the morning, Jean had decided to set out on his visit to his godfather; Rose's words had lent him some hope; however, he still sighed, and as he left his apartments he glanced sadly at Caroline's dwelling.

Jean arrived at the Marais, he saw again, and not without a certain pleasure, the neighborhood of his youthful follies and escapades; in a great city each locality is a fatherland. After pausing before the house where he was born, Jean went on to his godfather's.

It was Rose who showed the young man into

the room where Bellequeue was seated; Jean threw himself into the old man's arms, as he said,—

"Forgive me, for having doubted your friendship for a moment. You won't again wish me to marry a woman I have never loved, will you?"

"No, my dear Jean," answered Bellequeue, pressing his godson tenderly in his arms; "no, I shan't wish that again. But I have arranged another marriage for you."

"Ah, my dear godfather, don't let us speak of marriage. There is but one woman whom I can love."

"You must, however, marry her I am about to present to you, and who is there in the next room."

Jean looked around him in astonishment. Rose, who could contain herself no longer, opened a door and Caroline stood before him. She smiled at him, and held out her hand, which he immediately seized, and would have flung himself on his knees at Caroline's feet, but — he did better still, and took her in his arms.

When people really love, long explanations are quite unnecessary; they understand each other without them, and so it was with our two lovers, who, in a few seconds, had said all that was needed as to the past; the love and happiness of the present sufficed them.

Bellequeue looked at Caroline in admiration, and repeated with Rose,—

"She is an angel!"

As to his godson, he could hardly recognize him; he found he had such good manners and expressed himself so well that Bellequeue was almost afraid to speak before him.

"Well now," said Caroline to Jean, "do you still refuse the woman your godfather proposes for you?"

Jean kissed her dear hand, and that was his only answer. Caroline resumed,—

"My dear, I can confess it to you at last. I have loved you since the first moment I knew you. Something told me that you had changed to please me. Are you not better satisfied with your godson as he is now, monsieur?"

Bellequeue bowed, murmuring pretentiously,—

"He is so changed for the better, that I don't recognize him."

Jean was in a great hurry to consummate his happiness, and as Caroline had no wish but his, the marriage was fixed to take place ten days later. They would have no wedding festivities, but Caroline insisted that Bellequeue should go to breakfast at her house after the ceremony, and the retired hairdresser kissed the hand of the charming woman as he accepted.

During the ten days that preceded the marriage, we may imagine that Jean was more often at Caroline's than at his own rooms. But Mademoiselle Adelaide, who continued to haunt the porter's lodge, soon learned all that was transpiring. In

place of answering her negatively, he told her that M. Durand was to be married in a week, and that he passed all his days with Madame Dorville.

Adelaide was furious; she left the porter's lodge, overturning his magpie and crushing a parrot; she ran to Caroline's house, she went up, she rang violently; but Louise, after answering, "Madame cannot receive you," shut the door in her face; and the big girl, red with anger, went back to her parents, and shouted the moment she got in,—

"It's all up! It's all done with; M. Jean is to be married in a week. It's all the same to me, though; I never loved the rascally fellow; but I want to be married on the same day as he is—without fail. Papa, we must choose amongst the crowd of those who aspire to my hand."

The "crowd" was composed of one person only, he being a certain M. Courtapatte, an oil dealer, aged thirty-two years, four feet five inches in height, who, as is usual with very little men, had a marked predilection for big women.

"We can only offer you M. Courtapatte now," said Madame Chopard; "he's rather small, but—"

"That's all the same to me, I'll take him," answered Adelaide, "I like little men best. It's easier to give him my arm."

"That's true," answered M. Chopard, "all the more so as you have the arm of a matron."

"But remember, papa, that I must be married in a week also."